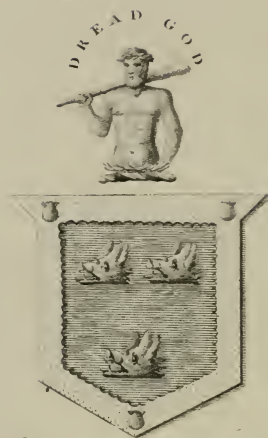


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MY UNCLE THE CURATE

A *Novel*.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE BACHELOR OF THE ALBANY" AND "THE FALCON FAMILY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL II.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 186, STRAND.

MDCCCLXIX.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BLACK CASTLE.

“ ‘ The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,
Breedes dreadfull doubts : oft fire is without smoke,
And perill without show : therefore your stroke,
Sir Knight, withhold, till further triall made.’
‘ Ah, ladie,’ sayd he, ‘ shame were to revoke
The forward footing for an hidden shade,
Virtue gives herself light through darknesse for to wade.’ ”

FAERY QUEEN.

It is a question often asked, what it is that makes the lives of some people so full of incident, that they seem never to make so much as the tour of their chamber, without meeting with some entertaining or remarkable adventure, while those of others are so

dull and monotonous that, place them in Faeryland itself, in the midst of giants, Saracens, dragons, and enchanters, nothing would ever occur to them out of the ordinary routine of the vulgarest animal life. The answer is, a radical difference of character ; and the particular traits of character which, perhaps, more than any other, often make one man's career almost a novel, while the want of them renders that of his neighbour as unromantic as a treatise on logarithms, are certainly enthusiasm and courage. Both qualities were possessed by Hercules Woodward in an eminent degree, and accordingly it was not often that he took one of his prodigious walks, or made a journey on his pony, or, indeed, in any other way, without seeing, or doing, or at the very least hearing, something notable or extraordinary, of either a serious or a ludicrous description. When we saw him last, he was starting from the parsonage, on the day that the weather cleared up. His homeward route (as the reader must be aware, if she has ever so little of the organ of locality) led him to the Black Castle, the scene of his exploits the

night before; and from thence his course (in fact, the only course left him, now that the bridge was gone) was to proceed to the stepping-stones, far up the estuary, which his experience in the tides and floods assured him he would find, at a certain hour in the evening, high and dry above water.

On arriving at the ruins, it suddenly occurred to him to make a short halt and search them, not with the idea of catching the villains themselves who had perpetrated the robbery, but because he thought it just possible that they might have inadvertently left a weapon, an article of dress, or something of the kind behind them, which might prove hereafter an important link in a chain of circumstantial evidence.

These ruins (whatever their story was) afforded not only a picturesque object to the landscape-painter, but a most convenient ambush to highwaymen; they stood within a few yards of the road, and their extent and intricacy were such, that miscreants familiar with them might use them with the greatest confidence, either for personal concealment,

or a receptacle for booty. Three circular towers (one of an imposing height) remained : the loftiest provided with stairs, which, though disjointed and in decay, were not impracticable to a supple climber; the parapets connecting these towers were broad, and in some places mantled with ivy, or overgrown with long grass, thistles, fox-glove, and even brush-wood, and it was commonly said, and probably not untrue (like some tales of a ghostly nature, which were also rife), that there were subterraneous passages likewise, to add to the mystery and perils of the place.

In fact, there was not a little risk in the examination which Mr. Woodward proposed to make, but he was not the man to think of danger when he had what he considered a duty to perform, and as to fear, he did not very well know what it was. The spaces between the walls on the level of the ground were mostly stuffed with heaps of fallen rubbish, or choked with brambles, docks, nettles, and other plants that exult and expatiate in stony places. They grew there with the utmost luxuriance, affording most enviable

cover for foxes and other wild animals, but the most uninviting harbour imaginable for any human creature, even for an outlaw, or a thief. Still it was possible, in two or three places (with the help of a stick for beating down the insurgent briars), to penetrate this thorny and tangled labyrinth ; and Hercules laid about him vigorously, being determined to leave nothing unexplored. Once or twice he thought he had made a discovery ; — some shining object caught his eye ; it might be a pistol ; it might be a knife, or a dagger ; — but it turned out, after he had stung his fingers, and pricked his legs, over and over again, to be nothing but a fragment of mortar, or a piece of wet slate glittering in the sun. With but a single exception, he detected nothing in this part of his investigation from which he could so much as divine that any thing living had lately resorted to the place. In one spot, opposite to a breach in the outer wall, on the side towards the road, the brambles and weeds appeared to have been recently crushed, as if somebody, or something had couched there. Struck by this little cir-

cumstance, Mr. Woodward made the minutest search for several yards round amongst the bushes and fallen materials (literally leaving no stone unturned), but to no purpose ; he found absolutely nothing, and accordingly proceeded to prosecute his inquiries in the upper part of the ruins, availing himself of the dilapidated stairs already mentioned. He commenced with the lowest of the turrets ; the ascent and descent occupied but a few minutes ; he startled a small white owl, and saw either a mouse, or a lizard (he was uncertain which) run out of one crevice into another ; but not a trace of a robber or a robbery. The second tower gave him a little more trouble, for the stair was in such decay that, to reach the first step that was trustworthy, he had to swing himself up by the branches of a vigorous young mountain-ash which sprang out of the rubbish underneath, as it were expressly to supply the place of the broken-down masonry. It was a feat of strength thrown away ; he pulled some bunches of the red berries, to amuse his little Woodward with on his return, and swung himself down again, debating in his mind

whether it was worth while to climb the third turret, which was twice as high as the higher of the other two. A school-boyish feeling decided him ; he recollected that he had never been at the top of it, and no doubt it commanded an extensive and bold view. The ascent for about thirty feet was almost quite dark ; the loop-holes being choked with ivy, or loose mortar. For the next ten or a dozen the winding stair was lightsome enough, but proportionally dangerous, for the outer wall was gone entirely, and he had to mount the small, triangular, slippery steps, with no protection upon one side whatsoever. It required caution as well as courage to achieve this in safety. The next and last stage was easier, though longer than the first, and quite as dark. Hercules, however, soon surmounted all difficulties, and emerging into the light, stood instantly face to face, and within less than a yard, of one of the fiercest and wildest-looking men he ever remembered to have encountered in his life, even when he used to go out on amateur revenue duty, still-hunting through

the Innishowen moors, or to protect the police.

If the fellow who confronted him so startlingly was not one of a gang of robbers, he certainly looked sufficiently like one to warrant the strongest doubts of his respectability and good intentions. He had the countenance of one who had seen the inside of prisons, and the pale ferocity of a man who was abroad more by night than by day. He was at least as tall as Hercules himself; his shoulders were broader, and his figure more erect and compact, suggesting (along with something in the style of his dress, shabby as it was) the idea that, if he had received any education, it must have been that of the drill-serjeant. However, he did not appear to be armed, which was something. It was a fearful spot, however, to encounter such a fellow in,—a small circular platform, not more than five or six feet in diameter, surrounded with a parapet indeed, but one that was broken down in several places, and not more than two feet high when it was per-

fect ; in fact, no protection at all, considering that if you fell, or were flung over it, there was a sheer descent of full thirty or forty yards into the road, or the court-yard beneath. The plain honest man and the palpable villain scrutinised and measured one another instinctively—the curate with a deliberate, dauntless eye, the other with a keen, but unsteady glance, which, with all its atrocity, betrayed apprehension, and even some degree of dismay and confusion. Woodward saw in an instant that the ill-looking stranger was there upon no lawful business ; it alarmed him, but he showed no sign of it—his colour underwent no change, his eye never wavered. The stranger was equally swift in making the discovery, to him still more alarming, that the formidable figure before him was that of a true man, although externally nearly as rough and formidable as himself. For a moment neither spoke a word. The stranger broke silence first, muttering some common-place allusion to the state of the weather. Hercules observed him, while he spoke, eyeing the cudgel in his hand

with intense interest, not unmixed with suspicion and fear.

“You have chosen a commanding place for making your observations,” he replied, with a fixed look and a firm voice.

“Aye,” said the ruffianly stranger, shrugging his brawny shoulders, and forcing a haggard smile, “it would be an ugly fall from this into the court below.”

“I shouldn’t like to try it, my man,” said Woodward, with the utmost coolness possible, but taking a swift comprehensive view of all the perilous circumstances of his situation, in such a place, with such an antagonist, should a contest ensue between them. In fact, it was utterly impossible that any two men (much less such men as these) could have a personal struggle where they stood without both going headlong over the parapet. Perhaps it was the conviction of this inevitable result that kept both parties from resorting to or provoking violence. At all events, the peace was kept. Hercules took as leisurely a survey of all that was to be seen from the tower as if he had only his wife by his side,

and was about to descend, when the stranger made a motion to do so likewise. Instantly, Hercules recollected the part of the stair where the wall was broken down for so many feet, and, resolving not to put himself in the ruffian's power by going foremost, made a step back—one was all there was room to make—and civilly, but standing firm as a rock, and, with another of his most determined looks, desired, or rather commanded his unpleasant companion to take precedence. Whether it was the power of the strong man's honest eye, or the tone in which he spoke, or that the other had really no violent purpose, certain it was that he obeyed ; and Hercules followed him at an interval of a few steps. When they came to the dangerous part, how easily could he have dashed the fellow to pieces ! The slightest push would have sufficed ; there was nothing to grasp, nothing but the weeds or the ivy ; the fall would have been inevitable and mortal ; how pleased he was that he had so courteously waived his precedence. The last stage was perfectly safe, as we have already seen ; the curate now lost

sight of the stranger in the dark, and began to turn over in his mind how to act when he rejoined him at the bottom; but he was spared all trouble upon that head, for when he issued from the low arched doorway of the tower, amongst the weeds and briars, the robber (for such it was now impossible to doubt that he was) was nowhere to be seen.

All quest was fruitless. Hercules recalled the traditions of subterraneous passages connected with the ruins, and at length, but very reluctantly, continued his journey. He found the stepping-stones barely passable, so that he had lost no time, and, having crossed the water (not without some hazardous jumps), was not displeased also to find that his wife had sent a gossoon with Sligo (his eccentric pony), to meet him, for it was growing late, and between climbing, walking, and other modes of motion, he was beginning to feel that he had exercised his muscles enough for the day. As fast as the pony could carry him he rode into Redcross, but before he went home, he called at the police-station in the village, and gave the *renseignements* of

the mysterious miscreant he had encountered ; height, size, hair, beard, complexion, expression, dress, just as they do in the "Hue and Cry," or in a French passport ; and not even satisfied with this degree of accuracy, the zealous curate drew a clever sketch of the fellow in pen and ink, and left it with the constabulary : for Hercules possessed in a degree the double talent of Titmarsh, whose pen, however, does not want the aid of his pencil to ensure his works a permanent popularity.

Perhaps there was not a stack of turf flaming on his hearth, when he regained his dear crazy old home ; and perhaps the copper kettle was not singing its ancient song, nor the preparations for tea shining in the light of the fire, nor a wife, as good as she was great, waiting to receive him in her loving arms.

Carry was deeply grieved at the robbery, alternately delighted and terrified at her husband's share in the dangers, and amazed beyond measure at the simplicity of the rector and curate, in thinking it practicable to keep such an event a secret for twenty-four hours.

Hercules then took his tea, and protracted his potations so long, that it was past midnight when his temperate carouse was over. He then poked out the fire with the nose of the bellows, although the poker was just as near him, and followed his blooming Omphale to her bower; where the last thing he said before sleep o'er-mastered him, was to deplore, for the hundredth time, that he had not been successful in tracking the desperado to his den.

“ Indeed, Hercules, I am heartily glad you were not,” was the last speech of his spouse.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BOROUGH OF REDCROSS.

Whether the bulk of our Irish natives are not kept from thriving by that cynical content in dirt and beggary, which they possess to a degree beyond any other people in Christendom?"

"Whether it be not true that the poor in Holland have no resource but their own labour, and yet there are no beggars in the streets?"

"What should hinder us from exerting ourselves, using our hands and brains, doing something or other, man, woman, and child, like the other inhabitants of God's earth?"

BERKLEY'S QUERIST.

It was the custom of Mr. Spenser and his children to breakfast on Sunday mornings at Redcross, with the Woodwards, and upon the Sunday that now came they were accompanied by Colonel Dabzac, and by Mr. Trundle, who was always quiet enough upon horse-back. It was a balmy bright morning in July ; just air enough on the water to curl the surface, and

upon the hills beyond to make every plant that had a sweet breath yield it abundantly.

As Redcross was a corporate town, it is only respectful to give some account of it before we enter its jurisdiction. It was a small and a poor place, but might have been a respectable one, both in size and wealth, had the inhabitants devoted half as much time to honest industry as they spent in complaining about any thing, or nothing, shrugging their shoulders, whining about the times, lounging about with their dirty hands in their empty pockets, and wondering what the Lord-Lieutenant, and this Board, and that Board, meant to do for them, or whether they meant to do any thing at all. The Protestant population belonging to the Established Church consisted of a grocer, a publican, two tailors, three policemen, and four revenue-officers, with their respective complements of wives and children. The Presbyterians numbered one shoe-maker, two blacksmiths, a baker, a carpenter, and a wheel-wright. There was one Quaker, who met in his own house; and the rest of the burghers of all trades and voca-

tions, a vast majority of the entire population, were Roman Catholics, principally McSwynes, with a few O'Gogarties, races of old renown in the county, but generally at feud with one another, for no assigned reason except a tradition that, fourteen hundred years ago, an O'Gogarty had pulled a McSwyne by the nose; which most legitimate cause of quarrel had been honestly transmitted from generation to generation, and was indeed at present the only inheritance that remained to either of those illustrious tribes. The scenery of Redcross was remarkably fine in its way; I mean, of course, the dunghill scenery. There was a charming picturesque mount, not so sweet as Hybla, fronting almost every house, the loftiest towering before the piggeries of the McSwynes, who were as vain of them as the Swiss are of their Alps. The streets of Redcross (for it possessed three or four) were never swept except by the wind, or watered but with *aqua celestis*; they were consequently as dusty in dry weather, as African plains, and in wet weather perfectly Parisian

—in point of mud. The Protestants, who were mostly Hoggs, threw all the dirt of the place upon their fellow-townsmen, the McSwynes, and even went so far as to say that dirt and Popery always went together. Unfortunately, however, for this theory, Amby Hogg, the sexton, and Ralph Hogg, the Presbyterian shoe-maker, were the slovenliest fellows in the borough, save the Quaker, who was perhaps the slovenliest fellow in the world, and had probably for that reason taken up his abode at Redcross. Then there was Mary Jane Hogg, wife of Luke Hogg, the grocer, who was a match for any slattern in Europe; but, to be sure, she made up by her finery on Sunday for the neglect of her person on the week-days. Besides, in these days of Protestant ascendancy the Hoggs had an authority and power which the McSwynes and O'Gogarties had not. The town had a corporation, and the members of it were all Hoggs, or of the Hogg faction. They might have paved, and swept, and washed, and whitewashed the municipality if they pleased. There were two al-

dermen of the name, three burgesses, two water-bailiffs, an officer called a bang-beggar, and another styled a butter-taster. The butter-taster-ship was a very snug thing (two hundred a-year with perquisites), and the holder of it lived at Carrickfergus. The bang-beggar was resident, and terrified the Celtic lazzarone by a furious display of authority annually, every Michaelmas. The rest of the year (three hundred and sixty-four days), mendicancy flourished better than any other profession, calling, or trade, in the borough of Redcross. There were beggars of all sorts, young and old, male and female, lame and blind, feeble and able-bodied,—ay, even rich and poor. The majority were strapping women and powerful men, women who should have had the alternative of the spinning-wheel or the stocks, and men who should have been put in a dilemma between the tail of the plough and the tail of the cart.

As to the theatres, museums, academies, halls, and institutes of the town, there are good reasons for being silent about them. But it had one or two establishments deserv-

ing of notice—a saving's bank, a dispensary, a circulating library, and two schools. The circulating library had been established by the joint exertions of Elizabeth Spenser and Carry Woodward. They had greater difficulties to encounter than you will easily believe ; their funds were so limited, and there was so much fanaticism to be encountered in some quarters, and so much selfishness in others. The wives and daughters of many of the neighbouring squirearchy wanted to stock the library exclusively with the usual trash of sentimental novels, and romances of “thrilling interest,” (to use a favourite phrase of Mr. Dawson's), ghosts and mysteries, love and murder. The ladies of the evangelical party would hear of nothing but sermons and tracts, lives of godly children, biographies of Calvin, and all manner of keys and antidotes to Popery. But what Elizabeth and Mrs. Woodward wanted was a useful little library for the poor people of all persuasions, not excluding religious books (except such as were controversial and probably offensive), but including every thing

moral, amusing, and instructive, suited to the young, and to people in humble life. However, nothing is to be done in this world, even the foundation of a village circulating library, without mutual concession and compromise ; and fortunately the Spenser party were not as obstinate as others, or the library would never have been formed. As it was, it contained intellectual diet for every sort, condition, and taste ; and the books, (most of them in a very hoggish and swinish condition), were jumbled together on the shelves, or paraded at the little unclean window, mixed with nuts and gingerbread, tops, balls, sealing-wax, and pop-guns, for Betty Hogg, the librarian, was allowed to improve her situation by dealing a little in other toys and sweets beside those of learning.

One of the schools, too, was entirely Aunt Carry's. It was a school for boys and girls under ten, and the school-mistress was an Ellen Hogg, who understood her craft, every art and branch of her profession, as well as Shenstone's school-mistress herself. She was a tall, stern-looking, middle-aged, powerful

woman, kindly to the industrious and docile, but the terror of truants and evil-doers. There grew no birchen-tree in her garden, but there were birches on the neighbouring hills, which provided her with abundant discouragements to sloth, and stimulants to virtue. Mrs. Woodward was a disciplinarian herself, and discipline reigned wherever her influence reached. Then Ellen Hogg was as neat in her person (though people did not expect it from her name), as any woman could well be. Before *her* door there were no beauties of dunghill scenery to be seen. Brushes and brooms were known to her. She used, and she enforced the use of them.

Encouraged by Aunt Carry, she aspired to reform the personal habits of the rising generation radically, and the urchin who was not washed by his mother at home was sure to be washed by Ellen at school, and whipped at the pump into the bargain. The blooming Carry visited the school frequently, always after church on Sunday, with her swarm of children about her, like little satellites about a great primary; and then and there

was a muster of all the pupils, and much catechising, and a report made of the doings and misdoings of the previous week.

The party from the parsonage reached the village and the curate's house in the highest spirits; the cheeks of the girls glowing with healthy colour, after their brisk mountain ride, Mr. Spenser sedately cheerful, Mr. Trundle perfectly inoffensive, and the colonel looking not quite so grim as he generally did. Hercules and his wife received their company in their several styles, but both with the utmost cordiality. The cordiality of the curate was blunt and rustic, with his Lizzy, his Vals, and Mags, cutting every name down but the repulsive Arabella's, in his homely, affectionate way.

Carry's reception was as ladylike as it was hearty. She was habited in her dark blue Sunday silk, with a plain straw hat, or open bonnet, with cherry-coloured ribands, which streamed upon such a bust and pair of shoulders as you may see in Rubens's picture of the abduction of the Sabine women, or in his works *passim*. Her bulk gave a momentum

to her embraces that was almost alarming when she pressed a child to her breast, or even grown girls like her nieces. Elizabeth, whom she clasped twice as fondly as she did Arabella, seemed for a moment lost in the arms of her portly aunt, whose bracelet, indeed, might almost have served either of the Spenser girls for a girdle.

“Carry, let me introduce Colonel Dabzac,” said Mr. Spenser, when the first rush of the embracing and ardour of kissing was over.

Carry curtsied with buxom dignity, and said she was very happy to see Colonel Dabzac in her house. Trundle was presented next, and received the same courteous notice. The curate made some excuses as awkward as they were needless, for the apartment was neat and clean; the repast substantial and excellent, the table-cloth the most beautiful fabric of Downshire, and white as the driven snow; in short, every thing was quite good enough for Dabzac, had he been a field-marshal. The only thing that happened untoward during breakfast was the sudden incursion of a couple of very pretty pigs (a

particular breed which Carry was rearing) into the parlour. This was certainly a little amiss; but the pigs were the cleanliest little animals of their kind you ever saw, and the excuse for their escapade was that the door of their sty was off its hinges, and Hercules had neglected to repair it, no doubt with a little of the procrastination of his country.

"I hope I don't intrude," said Aunt Carry, pleasantly, being the first to perceive the invaders.

The little Woodward's jumped from their seats with the greatest glee to pursue the little pigs back to the yard. Everybody laughed, even the dry Dabzac.

"Do you remember, Val," said Hercules, "the morning the gander paid you a visit while you were dressing in my study?"

"It was in the Observatory," said Mr. Spenser, with the gravity of a man correcting a serious historical mistake.

"Come, Val, it was not quite so good as that."

"It *was* the Observatory, papa," said the eldest boy, from the side-table, "for that was

the morning the refractory telescope was broken—the gander broke it.”

Another laugh, of course, at the boy’s blunder, which, after all, was no very great one, for the telescope *was* a refractory one, sometimes showing none of Jupiter’s moons, sometimes double the actual number.

The curate repeated the nursery rhyme, certainly very appropriate,

“Goosy, goosy gander,
Whither do you wander?
Up stairs,
Down stairs,
And in my lady’s chamber.”

The Woodward’s had five children, two fine, flourishing, large-limbed boys, and three rosy, bright-eyed girls. They had their breakfast apart, and were not very silent at it, but, at the same time not very boisterous either. Carry, and her nursery-governess, had them in too good order for that. Her children were striking proofs that affectionate and judicious discipline has no tendency whatever to break the spirit—at least, that it breaks no spirit which ought not to be broken.

There was never, perhaps, a more animated

breakfast—plenty to talk about as well as plenty to eat. The curate had his last adventure at the Black Castle to tell, and the rector related the explosion of the secret and the garrisoning and fortifying of the parsonage, with a quiet humour that diverted every body extremely. When Carry heard of Dawson having dined and slept at her brother's house, her features assumed their severe and displeased expression instantly, though perhaps only Elizabeth observed it; but when she learned that her nephew was actually at that moment ranging the country with his scampish friend, she roundly expressed her opinion that it would have been much seemlier in him to have accompanied his father and sisters to church. Mr. Spenser made no reply.

Children are sharp observers! Before breakfast was half over, the little Woodward had settled that Dabzac was courting their cousin Arabella, and we need scarcely say that their mother was not less quick in arriving at the same conclusion.

The two families and their visitors went to church in a long procession, taking the middle

of the street, the better to avoid the odorous mountain chains which adorned the fronts of the wigwams to the right and to the left,—almost everywhere, except opposite to the academy and residence of Mrs. Ellen Hogg, whom they found at her door, flaming in pink calico, marshalling a troop of her Protestant pupils, all scrupulously washed, though by no means all as well clothed and fed as philanthropy could have wished. Boys and girls made the most respectful obeisances to the majesty of Aunt Carry, as she paused for a moment in her stately progress to review the line and drop a word of gracious civility to the “*crassa Minerva*” of the village. Two of the children, who had stuck orange lilies in their breasts, got alarmed as Mrs. Woodward approached them, and dropped them on the ground by stealth. Elizabeth, also, received not a few rustic salutations, of a less ceremonious character. As to the rector and curate, they were so engrossed by the interesting subjects they had to talk and consult about, that they had no eyes for Mrs. Hogg and her herd, who

very properly, therefore, economised their genuflections for another occasion.

The police station was hard by the church; Hercules looked in to see whether any steps had been taken in consequence of the information he had given the night before, and was pleased to find that a search had been made that very morning, at break of day, through the ruins, and for several miles round about them. The police had made no capture, but they reported that they had discovered a pit, or chasm, in the ground floor of the castle, nearly concealed by weeds and rubbish, and communicating with a vault underneath, into which it was not improbable that the villain seen by the curate might have disappeared. Two of the party had ventured down, and it was an enterprise that required no little courage. The smell of tobacco established the fact that something human had recently harboured there, for (as one of the men observed) it couldn't have been a rabbit or a fox that was smoking. They struck a light, and minutely examined the vault, but found nothing but the back of a letter, which the chief

constable produced. The direction was in a gentlemanlike hand, but such a hand as the acutest clerk in the post-office could scarcely have decyphered. Mr. Spenser said it looked like the name of Dawson, but Hercules thought it was Lawlor ; one of the constables suggested Roberts, and another was positive it was Moran. There was an initial before it, which might have been almost any letter of the alphabet, but it certainly bore a strong likeness to the first letter of the surname. On the other side was a scrawl in another hand, but in pencil, and so much defaced as to be nearly as illegible as the writing in ink. It looked like an inventory of some kind, and the word "pictures" was tolerably plain at all events. Hercules took the paper from the officer, saying that his wife was very skilful in decyphering bad writing, and now the bell ceasing to toll announced that it was time for divine service to commence.

It was a small, modest, whitewashed church, a little ruinous, and not like the picturesque old village churches in England, screened and adorned with those ancient yews that fur-

nished the British infantry with their good bows, before the bow was superseded by the firelock. But the ivy for which Ireland is justly renowned had taken a great fancy to one side of the rude edifice, and had crept up to the very summit of the belfry, so as to impede the swinging of the bell a little. This relieved the otherwise naked aspect of the building, and harboured flocks of sparrows, which made no scruple of chattering often in the very midst of the Litany. The churchyard was small, and so populous with the fathers and forefathers of Redcross, that the green graves rose in hillocks, up to the level of the windows, and sometimes still higher, obstructing disagreeably both the light and the air. It was an ancient burial-place. One or two of Mr. Spenser's predecessors had inhumanly endeavoured to monopolise it for Protestant interment, but there had been no such detestable bigotry and foul injustice in his time: it was the common resting-place for the dead of the parish; the Hoggs, McSwynes, and O'Gogarties slumbered side by side, their differences at an end; their

feuds forgotten; setting an example of peace and tranquillity, which few of them set when they were above ground.

Nothing happened very remarkable during the service of this Sunday. Hercules read the prayers with stentorian voice and energy. Mr. Spenser read his quiet, rational, and impressive sermon, upon brotherly love and Christian charity, not without reference to an approaching anniversary, on which it was too much the custom of his Protestant parishioners to indulge in demonstrations which gave umbrage to their Catholic fellow-townsmen, and led to counter exhibitions of the opposite colour, not always terminating without infractions of the peace. In the midst of the discourse, the sparrows happening to be particularly loquacious in the ivy, the curate (who, orange as he was in principle, made it a point himself to be as soothing and pacificatory as possible at this exciting time of the year) gave a nod to Amby Hogg, the sexton, to go out and chase away the disturbers, but Amby either performed this (an ordinary duty of his office) very imper-

rectly, or not at all, for the chattering continued all through the sermon. The truth, indeed, was, that the sexton was very far from approving of Mr. Spenser's dissuasives from strife and faction, for he kept a small public-house which did twice the usual business when the orange lilies were in blow, and the sparrows, in his opinion, were doing no great harm in drowning a discourse so prejudicial to his trade. The shrewd Aunt Carry, too, whose roving and piercing eye let nothing pass that passed around her (even when the little Hoggs in the aisle whispered one another on a matter of gingerbread), could easily perceive, by the slightest possible scornful curl of Colonel Dabzac's insolent lip, that he was saying to himself "we wouldn't stand that sort of talk at Tanderagee."

But Dabzac was doomed to undergo something still more revolting to his feelings before the day was over, for Mr. Spenser met the benevolent and burly Father Magrath in the street after church, and invited him home to dinner. Magrath (who had been as zealous that day at the altar as the rector had been in

the pulpit to inculcate the doctrines of peace and charity) accepted the invitation cheerfully, and promised to overtake the party on the mountain. It was a chapter of Irish history to mark how the colonel looked at the priest, just as if he was a dog, or the priest of a religion in which a dog was the divinity. Father Magrath, on the other hand, eyed the colonel with the defiant air of a man who felt that he represented the people, and that the cause of the people was "conquering and to conquer." The intense enmity with which they regarded one another was, indeed, the means of keeping the peace between them ; for, feeling that any converse must inevitably lead to a warmth of altercation incompatible with good manners, particularly in ladies' company, they refrained, by mutual consent, from holding any intercourse whatsoever.

But what had become of Mr. Trundle ? He certainly came out of church with the rest, yet, when Mr. Spenser began to collect his little flock of relatives and guests, whom he was that day to provide with carnal as well as

with spiritual food, "the little, fat, round, oily man" of projects was not to be seen. There was a game of "hide and seek" about the precincts of the church to find him; and where should he turn up at last but in Mrs. Hogg's school-room, getting the strapping Ellen herself and all her scholars, male and female, down to the smallest thing that could make a scratch with a pen, to sign his petition and address to the Crown for the ship-canal between Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETURN.

“Here we go up, up, up,
And here we go down, down, downy.”

NURSERY RHYMES.

THE return to the parsonage resembled the march of a caravan. In front rode the Spenser girls and Colonel Dabzac. Then came the curate's inside car, a curious, square, spacious vehicle, of very rude construction, painted dark-green, and drawn by a mule; it contained Carry herself (no bad proof of its capacity), one of her little girls on her knee, another by her side, rather pinched for room, and the two boys, great Billy Pitt and little Hercules, both still petticoated, on the opposite seat, their red and white legs now and then appearing amidst the ample folds of their mother's dress. The car was

followed by the rector on his brown mare, Mr. Trundle triumphing in his accession of signatures, the curate bestriding Sligo, and Dr. Wilkins, the doctor of the neighbourhood, who always paid Mrs. Spenser a Sunday visit, and generally dined at the parsonage on that day. Sometimes Elizabeth fell back to chat with her aunt, and point out some beauty in the prospect; sometimes Hercules bolted forward to join his nieces, take his little namesake up before him on the pony, or ask the elder boy the Latin for a goat or a seagull, just to see how he was improving under his mother's tuition. He had a prodigious stock of nursery hymns, too, for the entertainment of children, and tales of Æsop's immortal fox, to whose deeds he sometimes gave a political complexion, so much so, that the rector used to say—"Hercules, your fox is always a Whig."

Doctor Wilkins was a remarkable man; he had the most lugubrious countenance you ever saw, yet he seldom spoke but he made you die laughing. He was well worth a college of your grave formal physicians. It was

hard to say how it was Doctor Wilkins made you laugh, but he did it, never once smiling himself ; on the contrary, seemingly quite unconscious that he was at all amusing, and looking the picture of the profoundest melancholy, while every body within hearing was holding his sides. He knew every body, and had a dry, solemn, historical way of reproducing the preposterous things he heard or witnessed, which (enhanced by a smooth rich brogue) was absolutely irresistible. He embellished very little, but he brought out the ridiculous points to admiration, and in the most artless way in the world, more as if he was talking to himself, than trying or wishing to entertain the company. It was in reality comic talent of a high order, but he was an able physician likewise, and justly popular with both rich and poor all round the country.

It was a sultry day in the valleys, but on the heights and on the water there was a delicious breeze. Mrs. Woodward, not being partial to boating, lamented the destruction of the bridge, and began to stir up the

gentlemen to have the mischief repaired promptly.

“I was over at Major Armstrong’s yesterday,” drawled the doctor, “and they were talking on that subject. O’Madden was dining there, and one or two more.”

“The bridge is, or I should say *was*, on the Major’s property, I believe,” said the rector.

‘One side of the water is the Major’s ground,” replied Wilkins, “and the other, it appears, is The O’Madden’s.”

“The expense will be trivial—I should say under twenty pounds,” said Mr. Spenser.

“So they were saying,” said the doctor “but, from all I could collect, I doubt if the work will ever be done, necessary as it is, unless the county takes it in hand, or His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.”

“The Lord Lieutenant !” exclaimed Mr. Spenser,—“why it’s not a bridge in the Phœnix Park !”

“The Major says it’s the business of the Grand Jury; O’Madden is for throwing it on the government. I’ll tell you more,” added the doctor,—“there was a bit of a

memorial drawn up in my presence, and I left them seriously talking of sending up a deputation to the Castle, to-morrow or next day."

"You astonish me," said Mr. Spenser, "though I have been long enough in Ireland, too. Why, in England—"

"But we are not in England," said the doctor.

"I sometimes think we are in Higgledy-Piggledy," said Carry Woodward.

"And The O'Madden, too!—a man who never opens his lips but to bluster on patriotism and independence," cried Mr. Spenser, with unusual warmth.

"And isn't it the height of patriotism to keep our own money in our pockets, and get as much as we can out of Johnny across the water?" drawled the doctor.

"I've a good mind," said the curate, "to go up with the deputation to Dublin, and put in my private claims at the same time. I want a hinge to the door of my pig-sty, as *you* know, Val."

“A capital satire it would be,” said Mr. Spenser.

After some time the rector and curate recommenced their argument on college education, and Hercules, as before, had the best of it decidedly, clearly proving that it was far more difficult for a young man to go through the Dublin University without some improvement, than through either Oxford or Cambridge, and again enumerating with enthusiasm all the legs of mutton he had eaten, and all his ambrosial nights with Tom Beamish.

While this dialogue was going on, Elizabeth was riding close alongside of the car, conversing on the same topic with Mrs. Woodward. They talked also of Mr. Dawson, whose connection with Sydney was growing every day a source of greater uneasiness to the ladies of the Spenser family.

“Has your father no control?” asked Mrs. Woodward, earnestly.

“He is so occupied with Mrs. Spenser, and his books,” said Elizabeth.

“I have no patience with my brother,” cried Carry, in great vexation; “the worst of

this unfortunate robbery is, that it seems likely to entangle Sydney still more with that dangerous man. What an evening you must have had with him! Was he as coarse as usual?"

"Indeed, aunt," said Elizabeth, smiling, 'his coarseness is not half so disagreeable as his refinement; but I would freely forgive both, if he would only not be so excessively attentive to me as he always is; he was particularly odious the other evening."

"My poor girl," said Carry, with compassionate vehemence, "if I were your father, or your brother, I would not allow such a person as Mr. Dawson to come within twenty miles of you, if there was a pistol, or a horse-whip to be had in the world."

It was curious to observe the looks of admiration and awe with which Mrs. Woodward's children regarded her, when she delivered herself in this impassioned sort of way. Their eyes were riveted on her face, and the play of her animated though massive features was indeed very imposing.

"I am sometimes surprised at papa," said

her niece, after a moment's pause, "he is so observant, and so naturally fastidious; but I never saw him so annoyed by Mr. Dawson's manners and conversation as he was on Friday."

"Very well," said Mrs. Woodward, "but will he forbid Sydney to keep his company?—that's the question."

"But my uncle, you know," rejoined Elizabeth, "sometimes takes Mr. Dawson's part, so we must not be so hard upon papa."

"Oh, many a battle I have with your uncle on that subject," said Carry, "indeed, I think it's the only thing we ever fight about—except the state of his study."

Before dinner there was a grand levee held in Mrs. Spenser's boudoir; Miss M'Cracken and Rebecca officiating as maids of honour; and the salts and tonics, with a bouquet of magnificent green-house flowers, duly arranged on a little oval table covered with a fair napkin. Doctor Wilkins, the state-physician, had recommended her to receive visitors, knowing the efficacy of a little gossip and excitement in female disorders of

the nervous class. The bed-room was the prettiest room in the house, overlooking a flower-garden, with the water and hills beyond, and furnished both with taste and luxury, the taste being the husband's and the luxury the wife's. The lady sat near the window, with pillows behind, pillows under, and pillows on each side of her, richly attired in black satin, and looking so very pale, that you expected to hear some news from the other world every time she opened her lips. Mrs. Spenser was one of those women who know something about everybody in a certain sphere, and who are expert at discovering some sort of relationship or connexion more or less remote between themselves and everybody else in the same privileged circle. She graced Dabzac at once with her special favour, knew some near relatives of his intimately, and presumed he was related to Sir Thomas Dabzac, of Shropshire. Her reception of Aunt Carry (whom she stood slightly in awe of) was civil enough, more because she was a Spenser, than because she was the best of women ; but she returned the friendly greetings of the curate

with a coldness which, however, hurt the rector more than it did Hercules himself, who despised the lady too much to care for the temperature of her courtesy, had it been down to zero. Mrs. Spenser, indeed, looked on curates in the light of tutors and such low people. As to the doctor, he was too useful to be snubbed ; but, indeed, he would not have brooked it from her ; he was one of the few people who kept her in any subjection, contradicting her with a courage that astonished Mr. Spenser, and returning slight for slight, the true way to deal with impertinent women, whether in their boudoirs or their drawing-rooms.

“ Who preached to-day, my dear ? ” she said to Elizabeth, who sat close to her. She knew very well that her husband had preached, but she had her own small reasons for asking.

“ Papa,” replied her step-daughter.

“ Papa !—again ! ” exclaimed the white lady in black satin, in a weak but perfectly audible tone.

The point of this short speech was in the “ again,” or rather in the tone and look with

which the word was pronounced. It conveyed most distinctly, and was intended to convey "what is the use, Mr. Spenser, of keeping a curate, if you preach yourself so often?"

Carry fired up, and bit her lip—only for the strangers present she would never have put up with it. She sometimes gave Mrs. Spenser a bit of her mind, as well as Doctor Wilkins. The fact, however, was, that Mr. Spenser did preach much more frequently than most rectors do who have curates to preach for them. People sometimes said that he was the curate and Mr. Woodward the rector. It arose from Mr. Spenser's considerate regard for his brother-in-law, who, having so large a family, and so poor a stipend, was compelled to have other irons in the fire to make out a respectable livelihood.

The rector now expressed his hope that Mrs. Spenser would join the family at dinner: "What do you say, Doctor Wilkins?"

"I say yes, by all means; it will do her

all the good in the world," answered the doctor, bluntly and decidedly.

"Ah, I am not equal to it—I am not indeed, Doctor Wilkins;—the very idea of dinner makes me ill—doesn't it, Miss M'Cracken?"

Miss M'Cracken assented, of course ;—it was in the routine of her office.

Mrs. Spenser continued, speaking as if it was an effort far beyond her strength, "She hoped Colonel Dabzac would excuse her, she was always such a wretched invalid ; the climate of Ireland was killing her; and you may imagine," she added, "that the late awful event has almost finished me; I can bear any thing—any thing in the world—but this dreadful state of things, when we can't call our lives our own, without having one's house fortified like a castle, and the police at one's very door."

"Oh, be asy, my darling," audibly muttered Doctor Wilkins, in his long-drawn, comical way.

Mrs. Woodward had been watching his countenance, which had been growing longer

and longer during Mrs. Spenser's speech, until at last it grew as lugubrious as possible, and then he came out with his amusing "Oh, be asy."

"Indeed, Valentine," the lady went on, affecting not to hear the doctor, "I would greatly prefer having a military force; soldiers are so much better disciplined; I'm positive, if you would write to your friend Mr. —, at the Castle, he would order a regiment to be quartered here."

"A regiment, my dear!" exclaimed Mr. Spenser, smiling.

"Well, a company," said the silly invalid.

"Fudge, nonsense, humbug," interrupted Wilkins, unable to stand this any longer; "the best company for you is our company at dinner; that's the company you want, ma'am. Come, we must strengthen your nerves; rout you about, and put some flesh on your bones, ma'am. 'Faith, I'm not so sure that if Captain Rock was to pay you a visit in earnest, it wouldn't do you more good than the doctors. I'll order you an insurrection if you don't behave yourself."

Everybody laughed but Miss M'Cracken. Mrs. Spenser was struck dumb by the doctor's audacity, and enraged at the effect it produced on the circle.

"The doctor's a regular trump," said Hercules to his wife, as they went down stairs to have a little conjugal stroll on the sands and examine together the paper found by the police.

"I trust they will not persuade her to come down to dinner," said Carry, highly incensed at Mrs. Spenser's impertinences.

"So do I, devoutly," said her husband; "I sometimes think that poor woman is possessed with a fiend."

"God help the fiend," answered Carry, "that were possessed with her; I should say poor fiend, not poor woman."

"What a person for your brother to place at the head of his family?" said Hercules.

Something between a sigh and a groan that came from the abysses of Carry's voluminous person, heaving up her stomacher like a great billow, testified her cordial concurrence in the sentiment.

Directly Mrs. Woodward glanced at the paper, she said the name was Dawson, but the curate still insisted it was Lawlor, and said he had no doubt about it. His wife was just as positive on her side.

“But, my dear,” said Hercules, “how is it possible a paper belonging to Mr. Dawson could have found its way into a vault under the Black Castle?”

“Easily enough,” replied Carry, looking very mysterious, and speaking very deliberately, “if Mr. Dawson had a hand—”

The curate was too indignant to allow her to finish the sentence. He gave her an awful lecture on what he called the female vices of suspicion and detraction. Carry bit her lip, but made no answer.

B O O K VI.

C H A P T E R XXVIII.

THE ISLAND.

“Oh, had we some bright little isle of our own
In the blue summer ocean far off and alone!”

MOORE.

“Blanda pericla maris.”

CLAUDIAN.

MR. SPENSER proposed to put off the picnic voyage to the island until the return of his son;—a cruise without Sydney seemed, indeed, like a fleet going to sea without an admiral;—but his daughters and their aunt were unanimous against the postponement; not that they were pleased to be without Sydney (rough as he was), but his presence would probably involve that of his friend Dawson, the feeling against whom was so strong, that the party would have been

broken up had the postponement been insisted on. Mr. Spenser intended to have made one of the voyagers, but he was compelled to do service on that day upon terra firma. At an early hour in the morning he was waited on by the commandant of the police force, whose object was to intimate that he was under the necessity of withdrawing the garrison from the parsonage, as the services of the men were required in a neighbouring parish, where some slight disturbances had actually broken out connected with the collection of tithes. This intelligence was doubly unpleasant; the agitation was approaching alarmingly near, and protection was about to be withdrawn at the very moment it seemed to be really desirable to have it. How to communicate the news to Mrs. Spenser was, however, the practical difficulty that first occurred. There was, of course, another hubbub, quite as great as what took place when she discovered Maguire's robbery. There was no resource but to write to the Under-Secretary for the aid of the military. Mr. Spenser doubted the absolute necessity of the application, but he was compelled to sit down by his wife's bedside, and an urgent letter, dictated by that lady's own lips,

was sent by the next post up to Dublin Castle.

The Woodwards (having pressed Doctor Wilkins into their service) sailed from their own place of embarkation close to the village. The curate had a good stout well-built smack of his own, called the *Caroline*, after his wife. The arrangements were rough, but not very uncomfortable, and, when a pic-nic on the island was in view, the smack was always provisioned for a week, to guard against casualties, such as an unlucky shifting of the wind, or a sea-fog. Hercules was never so glorious as on a day like this. It developed his animal strength, and excited his animal spirits. It made him a boy again, and no boy could have more fully, or almost more boisterously, have enjoyed it. Carry promoted such expeditions on his account chiefly; it was his only relaxation after weeks of such pastoral labours as no pastor in the church but himself could have gone through. Indeed, his very relaxation would have broken down most other men.

The Spensers had their trim cutter, the *Gipsy*, and a pretty boat she was, though not to be mentioned on the same day with George Markham's *Circe*. Dabzac under-

stood something of navigation, but there were better seamen on board the *Gipsy*, or Mr. Spenser would not have committed his children to the Atlantic in her. The girls went on board immediately after an early breakfast, accompanied by the colonel, and Miss M'Cracken, with the second brood of the Spensers.

There was so little air on the water near the parsonage, that the cutter had to be towed for a couple of miles down the creek, where she caught a breath of wind from the hills to the northward, just sufficient with the help of an ebbing tide to waft her gently towards the sea. The scenery was beautifully bold, and grew wilder and loftier every moment, while the inlet narrowing at the same time towards its mouth brought the heights on each side closer and closer, until at length the voyagers found themselves in a marine gorge, through which for some minutes there seemed to be no passage. The height of the mountains just here was so great as to exclude the direct rays of the sun at that early hour, so that a certain air of sombre magnificence distinguished the scenery at this spot, which had therefore acquired the romantic name of the Dark Glen of the Ocean. A few knots further changed the

view remarkably. As you emerged from these gloomy waters, you passed as it were through the jaws of the gulph, and the prospect of the Atlantic burst upon you in all its splendour. There was always a little agitation here on the stillest day in summer. The Spensers were always distracted between their admiration for the view at this point and the disagreeable motion that uniformly accompanied it. Here, too, when there was any breeze, you were sure to get either all the benefit, or all the disadvantage of it. The breeze was now as propitious as possible. The cutter showed all her canvass, and flew through the waves merrily.

“Why, that is a castle before us!” cried Dabzac, struck by the singular appearance of a pile about half a league distant, in the direct line of their course.

It was not a castle, but only a huge castellated cliff, forming the eastern face of the islet towards which the Gipsy was bound. The resemblance to an extensive castle, like that at St. Goar on the Rhine, was very remarkable; geologists accounted for it by the basaltic character of the rock of which the islet was composed. It seemed a group of ruinous turrets, of various heights, some very commanding, and connected by parapets and

battlements, in which the eye, aided a little by the fancy, discovered embrasures and portholes, and every thing that a regular fortress ought to be provided with. The mouth of a cavern near the centre of the mass had all the appearance of a low-browed arched gate with a portcullis. The deception, on the whole, was very complete and singular. It was sometimes called The Isle of the Tower, either from this remarkable peculiarity, or from a real tower or fort, the ruins of which still existed in the interior. But the name it commonly went by was Tory Island, probably a corruption of the other appellation ; or it may have been a Tory fastness in bye-gone days, when Tories were synonymous in the north of Ireland with robbers and rapparees. Mr. Woodward, who was a passionate antiquary, had a long and learned story from that extremely barren chronicle, "the Annals of the Four Masters," about the original occupation of this island by the Fomorians, a race of gigantic corsairs, or sea-kings, sons of Ham, and consequently grandsons of Noah. Mr. Spenser used to say that Hercules looked extremely like a Sea-King himself.

The Gipsy was joined, amidst mutual cheers, by the Caroline, immediately under

the gigantic crags we have described. The water there was deep enough for a frigate to ride in, almost up to the very edge of the rock, so that (the sea being smooth as crystal) the smack and cutter cast their anchors within a yard of the shore, and the party actually jumped on land, all but Aunt Carry, for whom a stout plank was provided.

At first sight you thought there was no issue from the short and narrow strip of beach on which you stood, after landing at this spot ; it seemed as if you were completely hemmed in by the water on one side and the tall towered cliffs on the other. But a steep stair, as winding as a cork-screw, had been roughly, but ingeniously, hewn out amongst the fissures and crevices of the rock, enabling you to climb with considerable labour, but without much risk, not exactly to the summit, but to a cleft, as it were, between two bastions, from which a hollow slope of beautifully smooth and verdant turf introduced you at once into the ferny interior of the island, right amongst the panic-stricken conies. The whole extent was not more than some dozen of acres ; a little hollow or basin, with the richest wild vegetation, presenting a rocky front to the ocean on every side.

You may fancy how the young Spensers and their cousins, the still bolder little Woodwards, revelled in a place like this. The latter were the first to gain the top of the ascent, and they were a little scared and surprised to find the island apparently in possession, not of the rabbits, as usual, but of an enormous Newfoundland dog, whom they saw careering through the brake, lost in its deep masses, now appearing again, rushing up to them with apparent hostility, and as swiftly scampering off once more, in exuberance of canine spirits. It puzzled them extremely to find such an animal on the island, and it puzzled the wiser heads of the party, too, as they toiled up the craggy parapet in succession. Carry Woodward always felt this part of the expedition sensibly, and often and often had declared that she never would undergo it again ; but still there had never been a party to Tory Island without her.

The proper way to go down the green slope was running ; the curate, Doctor Wilkins, and the boys, were already up to their hips in the fern ; the great Hercules, quite as wild as the little, who was as wild as one of Cadwallader's goats. The curate had already shot a brace of rabbits. Carry

stood puffing and panting to rest herself, looking quite overcome and exhausted. Dabzac offered her his arm to make the descent, but she said she always managed it best by herself, with just the help of her parasol. The girls made the race with their usual activity and success. Miss M'Cracken got down with the help of Doctor Wilkins, and poor Mrs. Woodward got down too, only that just at the last the bank was too slippery, or her parasol too frail, or her momentum too considerable, for she fell in the most amusing manner, with the utmost possible safety, and came sliding down to where the turf was level, and further slipping was against the laws of nature. Elizabeth was at her side in an instant, and there was merry laughing, of course, Carry laughing herself as pleasantly as the rest, as soon as she got on her legs again. Meanwhile the dog continued to make his evolutions through the fern, occasioning a dozen speculations as to how he came there and who could own him. Once or twice he disappeared on the opposite side over a brow which led to the ruin already mentioned, under which, upon a spacious flat rock, about thirty feet long by twenty broad, the Spensers had long ago fixed a rustic table of great massiveness, and surrounded (except

on the side next the sea) with a bench formed of huge stones, cushioned with green sods. This was the point to which parties of pleasure (always more or less sensual) generally made in the first instance. The boatmen carried the panniers with the provisions, and Mrs. Woodward herself superintended the dispositions for what many people consider the most indispensable part of a *fête-champêtre*.

"There must be other people, papa, on the island beside ourselves, to-day," said Billy Pitt to his father.

"I can't think it possible, Billy," said the curate, "my fear is that there has been a wreck; it is only too probable that the yacht we saw in danger during the gale has been lost here; I cannot account in any other way for a dog like that being on the island, and see, he has a collar round his neck."

The dog rushed past them at the moment up the slope that commanded the ruins and the rustic table beneath them: Billy Pitt ran forwards with nearly equal speed, and in a few moments made a signal to his father to hasten after him, which, of course, he did with his giant strides, expecting to see something surprising, and he was not disappointed.

At the rustic table, about fifty yards beneath the place where he stood, sat two young men, attired in seemingly naval uniform, actively engaged in discussing an excellent dinner, and seemingly as much at their ease, and at home, as if the island belonged to them in fee-simple. The dinner was not entirely a cold one, for a wreath of smoke was perceptible ascending from one of the dishes, which seemed to consist of broiled fish ; a supposition which was confirmed by the circumstance that a fire had been kindled, and was still burning within the adjacent ruins, which had an arched gate-way communicating with the flat rock.

“They have turned the hall of Conaing’s Tower into a kitchen,” said Billy Pitt, highly excited and irritated at what, to his ingenuous and enthusiastic mind, appeared a most sacrilegious proceeding.

“Yes, and I am mistaken,” said Mr. Woodward, “if that is not the cook lying on his back in the shadow there under the wall, resting from his labours.”

“See, papa, they are drinking cider.”

“More probably champagne, Billy,” replied his father ; “upon my word, they seem to be a pair of luxurious young pirates.” The curate knew what champagne was, probably

not so well by the report of the cork, as the report of the world. Even Mr. Spenser did not drink expensive wines, and as to episcopal dinners, the curate had only read of them, and scarce believed half that he read.

“They do look piratical,” said Doctor Wilkins, “the taller of the two wears a cutlass, and I see something behind the other like a blunderbuss—it is either a blunderbuss or a telescope.”

At this moment, one of the banqueters on the rock gave a shrill whistle, and cried Pedro in a sonorous voice, which made the cliffs and caves ring again. Pedro was chasing the rabbits and other innocent little wild beasts many a yard away, too far to be within hearing of the signal, and the young man who had made it stood up to look after his dog, and in so doing discovered Mr. Woodward, his son, and Doctor Wilkins peering down upon him from the edge of the precipice. If the curate had been surprised at the sight of the strangers in naval dress, they, upon their part, were far more startled at the sight of him. He was indeed a figure that might well have been taken for a pirate, and a formidable one. His gigantic size, his features, which looked at a distance so trucu-

lent, his round, broad-brimmed, low-crowned glazed hat, his blue jacket, and the fowling-piece on his shoulder, formed an *ensemble* which led irresistibly to the conclusion that he was some bold smuggler, or sea-attorney, who had made this almost inaccessible islet his stronghold. Doctor Wilkins wore a blue jacket also, and might be very well taken for a mate or a cockswain.

The curate was soon made sensible of the impression he produced, for the young man who was on his legs seized a rifle which had been lying beside him, and made a sign to his comrade to arm himself, too, which he immediately did, grasping the gun which Billy had taken for a telescope. At this critical moment arrived Aunt Carry, escorted by the colonel, and followed by her beautiful nieces and the rest of the party. The young men looked at one another, and conversed in a low tone.

"The pirate or smuggler, or whatever he is, has got a jolly fat wife," said George Markham.

"And a fine family," said Vivyan.

"I fear it will turn out that we are the intruders," said Markham.

"I fear so," said his friend; "these people may possibly be the proprietors of this island,

they look wild enough for it ;—*we* certainly are not;—in my opinion we ought to parley with them.”

“And invite them to join us,” added George, “the women look civilised, at all events, and so do two of the men,—that tall fellow in the pea-jacket with the gun is certainly a very ill-looking desperado.”

“Probably a kind of amphibious [game-keeper ;—remember we are in Connaught.”

“Well, here goes,” cried Markham, “I’ll face the party, strong as it is ; do you make that lubberly Lawrence stir himself; threaten to mast-head him, and set a few flasks of champagne to cool in the water ; there’s a great lobster left in the square basket—make him dress it;—I’ll give a whistle should I want you to come to me,”—and so speaking, the active young sportsman sprang up the rocks in an oblique direction by a track he had before discovered, and which conducted him in less than five minutes to the group on the top of the cliffs, who were eagerly discussing who the invaders of their island might be, and where they should spread their dinner, now that the flat rock had been usurped so unceremoniously.

The curate, feeling himself the leading personage of his sex present, advanced to

meet Markham, who did not at once renounce the opinion he had formed of him at a distance ; but the misapprehension was removed directly Woodward spoke, which he was the first to do, apologising most civilly for having interrupted the young men so unseasonably.

“ It is our part to apologise,” said Markham, with a gesture of courtesy intended for the ladies who stood close by, as much as for the strange personage with whom he talked,—“ but our story is simply this: we are mariners in distress—all but ship-wrecked—we have been cast upon this island, where we are doing our best to make ourselves comfortable ; amongst other things, we have been trying to-day to make out a dinner ; and if you and your party will only honour my friend and myself with your company down on the table-rock yonder, we shall esteem it the greatest kindness you can possibly confer upon a pair of weather-beaten tars.”

The curate looked at his helpmate, and she in her turn looked at the curate, and the looks of both were so decidedly affirmative that very few words were necessary to conclude the treaty of peace and hospitality between the parties. Markham

stated his own name and his friend's, and Mr. Woodward (at his wife's prompting) observed the same formality, following it up by presenting the young Englishman to Carry, his nieces, and the rest of his faction in order. This done, he directed the crew of the *Caroline* to proceed to the usual place with the baskets (for he insisted on contributing to the entertainment), and in less than a quarter of an hour the whole human population of the island was assembled on the flat rock, as happy and animated a circle as ever met together on a convivial occasion. If Markham made a favourable impression on the women, you may conceive how much they were struck with Vivyan, whose appearance had been much improved by the exposure to the sun and air, which had slightly bronzed his complexion, and given him a manlier look than he wore when he sailed from Southampton.

His address was grace itself, his smile the blandest and brightest ; there was a quiet joyousness about him, a love of pleasing, and a disposition to be pleased, which, joined with his elegant person, cultivated taste, and a natural facility of expressing his thoughts in lively and agreeable language, made him one of the most fascinating young men of his time.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PIC-NIC.

“ Medio in fonte leporum,
Surgit amari aliquid, quod ipsis in floribus angit.”

LUCRETIVS.

THAT probably was the most remarkable and romantic pic-nic that ever took place. What a spot it was ! In the front of the party lay the glorious expanse of the Atlantic, with not an inch of dry land, no, not so much as a rock for a sea-mew to perch on, between the place where you stood and the mouth of the Mississippi. Behind, a gray ruin, with a legend, of course, and many a controversy, which we shall not molest the reader with, about its date and its architecture, amongst the Oldbucks of the Irish Academy. The curate (a little of a bore on Irish antiquities) is already warm on the subject with Markham, quoting Doctor Petrie, and warning him not to let himself be led astray by the heresies of Sir Wil-

liam Betham. Markham is looking at the ladies, and uncertain which of the girls to admire most, or whether the matron is not better worth looking at than either. Vivyan is speaking to Arabella, just because she happens to be nearest to him ; he has scarcely seen Elizabeth's face yet. All is tumult, surprise, and gaiety, on that strange wild place for a dinner-party. Miss M'Cracken is opening the hampers from the parsonage, and repaying herself for her pains by taking a foretaste of their contents. Mr. Lawrence (heartily weary of his "voyage pittoresque") is dressing the great lobster (a superb one it is, calling for lettuce, as big as cabbages), and Peter, the curate's butler, is committing all manner of *gaucheries* in the discharge of his office, and somewhat undecided whether the blunderbuss is a flask of champagne, or the flask of champagne a blunderbuss.

"We have heard a great deal," said Markham, at length escaping from the curate and the archæology, and addressing Mrs. Woodward, "we have heard a great deal of the 'wild sports of the west,' but we never dreamed of enjoying any thing at once so wild and so charming as this." The "charming" was meant for the lady he was accosting, and she replied with her goodliest smile

that "she feared the wildness was all upon the side of *her* party, for, often as *she* had visited the island, this was the first time she had found it in the possession of such a civilised and agreeable population."

It was a compliment to the Englishmen at the expence of the rabbits.

"We are only adventurers," said Vivyan, "something like Stephano and Trinculo, only we don't think of usurping Prospero's island."

"Our Prospero is not with us," said Aunt Carry. "I mean my brother, the Rev. Mr. Spenser, (father to those ladies," she added, in a parenthetical tone), "who will regret not meeting you here; but I hope before your cruise is over he will have that pleasure upon an island of more respectable dimensions than this."

Spenser!—the name struck Markham, and added to his surprises. He was on the point of inquiring whether the Mr. Spenser mentioned was Lord Bonham's friend, when one of the sailors came up to receive some directions from Mr. Woodward, and, addressing him, called him "your reverence."

If they had called him "your holiness," or "your majesty," they could not have more electrified the young Englishmen. Wild

sports of the west, indeed !—they both exclaimed internally, for the idea that Mr. Woodward was a clergyman had never occurred to them, nor was there any thing about his appearance at all suggestive of it, but entirely the reverse. It heightened their spirits to find so much to divert mixed with so much to attract and delight them. Men so odd and uncouth, and at the same time so replenished with good nature as the curate and Doctor Wilkins neither Vivyan nor Markham (who had been in the East, and seen Arabs and dancing dervishes) had ever encountered; and to find them in the society of three women, not merely with fine persons, but well-bred and accomplished, was one of those surprising things which people like to meet on their travels, and it was agreeably surprising, too, which made it so much the better. They saw some surprising things in Ireland that long vacation which were quite of another character.

Elizabeth that day looked supremely bright and joyous; she was passionately fond of nature, a girl who loved the gaiety of the open air, in the fern and heather amongst the rocks, the wild flowers, and the wild birds, better than the gaiety of any ball-room. Though her father was

absent, she had people with her who were very dear to her, and to whom she knew that she was dear; she idolised Carry Woodward, and was greatly attached to Uncle Hercules, without being blind to his oddities and mannerisms; then she had Arabella, and her little step-brother and step-sister, towards all of whom she felt exactly as a pure, healthy-minded girl ought to feel, solicitous for their happiness, and happy herself when she saw them happy. What an inestimable quality it is that deriving of pleasure from the mere prospect of it in others;—that basking in the light reflected from other faces;—how it multiplies the enjoyments of those who are fortunate enough to possess it; how it exceeds in intensity as well as dignity, and in durability still more than either, all satisfaction of a selfish nature; how wise and independent, as well as how good is it, to be capable of being thus made happy! Elizabeth Spenser abounded with this beautiful attribute; it was this, and nothing else, that gave that sweet, soft, glad lustre to her eye, that serene, sunny, musical expression to all her features, which, before his cruise in the *Circe* was over, flung its dazzling spell over one of the young Englishmen, and made that

day on the Atlantic islet the most important and critical of his life.

Markham (who was not long in establishing the identity of Mrs. Woodward's brother with the gentleman to whom he had introductory letters) took the lead on the part of the English invaders, as the curate did on the part of the Irish residents, during the protracted festivities of the rock. Vivyan, in the beginning of acquaintanceships naturally shy, conversed a little with Mrs. Woodward, who sat upon his right during the banquet, seldom addressing the whole party, and never except when Markham stimulated him to the effort. Elizabeth was his neighbour to the left ; he often marvelled afterwards how little impression she made on him in the first moments of their acquaintance.

The expertest reporter of a London journal would probably have failed to give a tolerably correct report of the mirthful, hearty, enthusiastic, and motley conversation of that day. The curate's spirits were naturally somewhat too exuberant, but they were just sufficiently controlled by the less turbulent hilarity of the rest of the party. In a company of Irishmen Hercules was Irish,

but when you diluted the Hibernian alcohol with English milder spirits, you produced a very agreeable and indeed civilised mixture.

Mr. Lawrence's lobster was applauded by all who tasted it, and the champagne did not diminish the vivacity of the circle. The very opening of it caused considerable merriment, for Peter, being the Ganymede of a man with an income of seventy-five pounds a-year, and having consequently never witnessed the phenomenon before, was very near tumbling over the cliff into unfathomed water, when the first cork bounced into the air. Mrs. Woodward is reported to have drank three glasses on that ever-memorable day, one with Markham, one with Vivyan, and one with Colonel Dabzac, who, on the whole, behaved himself very socially, for a lieutenant-colonel and a grand-master. Then uprose the curate, and "in his rising seemed," not "a pillar of state," but rather a church-steeple ; he rose to propose a general health to a reunion as agreeable as it was unexpected and picturesque, accompanied with a jovial prayer that the same society might assemble again at some future time on the same rock with hearts as light and faces as cheerful. The glasses were filled, the sunbeams danced

on the sparkling foam of the Epergnay grape, when a shrill shout from the younger members of the party, who were disporting themselves in the heath above the cliffs, attracted attention and interrupted the libation. The cry was "Sydney, Sydney." Mrs. Woodward and her nieces were disturbed and vexed by it ; Elizabeth, indeed, reproached herself with feeling as she did when the approach of her brother was announced, but it was not her brother whose approach she dreaded,—it was that of Dawson, and almost the next moment he stood at her side.

He and Sydney had returned to the parsonage that morning, soon after the expedition set out, and on receiving information of the pic-nic, they instantly took a boat and rowed to the island, Dawson not hesitating to join the party on his friend's invitation.

You could not, without the eyes of Argus, eyes to see every body at the same moment, have had an idea of the effect produced upon this occasion by the sudden apparition of Sydney and his companion. The Irish party fell at once several degrees in the estimation of the Englishmen. Sydney of himself would not have produced such a result, for his face was not yet fevered by

dissipation, or deformed by passion ; his eye had not lost its ingenuous light ; he looked a wild, ungoverned, but still a handsome and well-born, if not well-bred, boy. With Dawson, however, in conjunction with him, it was different. Markham instantly thought that he had seen Dawson somewhere in London, whether smoking in the Quadrant, betting at Tattersalls, or lounging and whispering in the gallery of the House of Commons, he was not certain. Both he and Vivyan soon learned that Sydney was brother to the fair girls whose acquaintance they had just made, and that Dawson was Sydney's friend, relative, or both, required no sagacity to discover. Let the reader imagine what must naturally pass through the mind under such circumstances ; the disappointment of the Englishmen on the one hand, the uncomfortable feelings of the Spencers and Woodward on the other, the feeling of being ashamed of an acquaintance and a relative, and that relative such a very near one.

There was an end of all hilarity and easy conversation. The efforts of the new comers to restore both only made the effect more remarkable. The curate alone received Dawson with any thing like cordiality ; he

rose to make a place for him at the table, but Frank Vivyan rose at the instant with the same object, and little dreaming of the pain he was causing both to Mrs. Woodward and Elizabeth, was instrumental in planting Dawson between them. In the act of performing this civility, he encountered Dawson's sinister and ambiguous eye with one so freezingly disregarding, that the look was never forgiven or forgotten.

Both aunt and niece had dined as well as Vivyan, so they saw no reason why they should linger at the table, while Sydney and Dawson satisfied the cravings of nature, particularly as another gorgeous sunset was on the point of taking place. They rose simultaneously, and a proposition was soon made and accepted to ramble over the island. The broad-brimmed white hat which Dawson wore, concealed the scowl with which he regarded the graceful Vivyan, as now conversing with Elizabeth he mounted the steep path that led to the top of the cliffs. However, he applied himself to his dinner notwithstanding, devoured the remnant of the lobster, and divided with Sydney a flask of champagne, neither inquiring from what cellar the wine came. Miss M'Cracken paid him little attention, knowing that he was no

favourite with Mrs. Spenser; but the honest curate, who never deserted a friend in need, took the best care he could of him, and conversed with him for some time. Amongst other things he asked Dawson whether the report was true that he was on the point of going into parliament for Rottenham.

The question excited Dawson's vulgar vanity, and made him swagger a good deal, and talk and eat simultaneously. He replied, that there was something in the wind, he believed, on the subject; but he would look before he leaped; no constituency should make a cat's-paw of him, and he was equally resolved to be no man's warming-pan; he didn't deny he was a liberal, and he didn't assert that the country had no wrongs and grievances, but he wouldn't pin himself to the tail of any agitator; he would blush, so he would—he pronounced it bloosh—to be a mere shillelagh in the hand of Daniel O'Connell himself.

Dawson often talked of blushing, but he never did.

The curate, however, felt that his principal obligation for the time being was to entertain the young Englishmen, and accordingly he now strode after Markham, who

was following the women, having been intensely disgusted with Dawson's display.

Miss M'Cracken, however, had overheard the conversation between Dudley and the curate, and taking a very different view of the former gentleman when she learned that he was of sufficient mark for a seat in parliament, she now did all she could to make him comfortable, helped him plentifully to tongue and chicken, and not only smiled and curtsied graciously when he proposed a glass of champagne to her, but drank off the glass with the same amiable complaisance.

"Your country is remarkable for the magnificence of its sunsets," said Markham to the curate, as they walked together, immediately behind Mrs. Woodward, her nieces, and Frank Vivyan.

"Men of your profession, sir," replied Woodward, "have constant opportunities of observing and enjoying such phenomena."

Markham smiled and undeceived the curate as to his profession, acquainting him that both himself and his comrade were only amateur sailors, though they wore a costume something resembling the naval.

"But where is your yacht?" asked the other. "You did not lose her, I trust, in the late gale."

"No," said Markham, "but how we preserved her, or indeed saved ourselves, I can hardly inform you ; I fear it was less by our seamanship than our good-fortune. However, we sustained so much damage that this morning we ordered our men to carry her into the port of Derry, to undergo the necessary repairs. We lost our bowsprit and our rudder."

"We could have managed all that for you at Redcross," said the curate ; "but what do you propose to do while your boat is repairing?"

"We propose, with your permission, to bivouac here, on this pretty isle of yours," answered Markham, coolly. "We are tolerably well armed and provisioned ; we have a tent, plenty of cloaks and blankets, lots of books ; oh, we shall do very well, I assure you."

"But we must try to provide you with somewhat better quarters, sir," said Woodward. "I hope you will kindly prefer our hospitality, rude as you will find it, to that of the rabbits and the sea-gulls. Besides, I don't think your friend looks as if his frame was quite equal yet to the hardships of a Robinson Crusoe life."

"Oh, is it Vivyan?" said Markham. "I

assure you he is a hardier fellow than you take him for. He was squeamish enough for the first week, but, faith, now he is the best hand in the Circe. However, your proposal is a very kind and agreeable one, and I have no doubt my friend will concur with me in accepting it very thankfully."

Markham then gave the curate a full account of the plan and the course of their voyage ; told him a good deal about Vivyan, a little about himself; assured him that pleasure was their sole object; and that they were visiting Ireland, neither as politicians to meddle with state affairs, artists to paint her scenery, or commissioners of the *Times* newspaper, to investigate the relations of landlord and tenant. He could not help thinking, as he said this, that finer subjects for sketches, either with pen and pencil, than the singular personage he was talking to, and his fair vast wife, it would not be easy to find between the tropics, or beyond them.

That fair wife was now sitting on a cushion of turf, soft as Lyons velvet, and green as oriental emerald, save where a tuft of purple heath broidered it, contemplating the glories of the evening, the sun, the ocean, and the mountains, with an eye to enjoy, and a mid

to feel them. She had partly conquered Vivyan's reserve, and was now holding with him the sort of conversation that cultivated women are so fond of, fanciful, poetical, lively, sentimental without melancholy, a grain of philosophy in it to make it serious, a strain of wit to make it brilliant, and a little touch of gallantry to throw a rosy hue over all. Perhaps no woman loves this sort of parley so well as a clever and handsome one of ripe years, with such a companion as Vivyan, young enough to be her son, but capable, as he was, of holding such discourse with her. Carry, too, enjoyed it the more, because it was rarely now that she met with a man of elegant mind and soft acquirements, with the exception of her brother, Mr. Spenser. Elizabeth sat in her shadow, on the same natural couch of green and purple, eagerly listening, but taking no part in the dialogue, except with her eyes, which incessantly chatted with those of her aunt, though they seldom encountered Vivyan's, who indeed was not seated so as to have the same full view of her that he had of Mrs. Woodward.

The curate had one fault on a pic-nic—he was as eager to get home as he was to set out.

"Your uncle is getting fidgety," said Carry, to her niece, as Hercules approached with Markham.

"It is still early, aunt," said Elizabeth, reluctant to leave the sun-set, and finding the conversation pleasing, though participating little in it.

Much, indeed, as Carry herself loved her husband, and dutiful wife as she was, she would very gladly have lingered another half hour on the green couch with her fascinating new acquaintance. But Mr. Woodward was commodore of the squadron, and when he gave sailing orders, his wife was not the person to mutiny, so she gave her hand to Markham, who helped her to rise, while Frank gave his arm to Elizabeth just in time to save her from the offer of Dawson's, who came up at the moment with the rest of the party, all now in motion for the beach. Dawson next addressed himself to Aunt Carry, who repelled him in a certain dry way she had, and which she well knew how to employ on proper occasion. She was a porcupine to men of his stamp, or rather a rhinoceros, for she was content with defensive operations, and made herself as impenetrable to the people she disliked, as she was affable and buxom to her favourites.

It ended in Dawson being obliged to put up with the governess, who, indeed, wanted the assistance of his arm to descend the rude winding stair amongst the rocks, and it was the least return he could make for the tongue and chicken she had helped him to. Lucy, being an accomplished coquette, managed to make herself extremely agreeable; and perhaps Dawson foresaw that so clever a girl might possibly hereafter be useful to him, for, though he was a little morose at first, he grew even more than polite after some moments, and formed on that occasion a sort of flirting friendship with Miss M'Cracken, which continued to the end of his career, and was not without important results.

Hitherto the day had passed without any incident more provoking than the intrusion of a disagreeable guest; but a painful occurrence took place just as the party was all mustered on the little narrow quay already described, and on the point of embarking in their respective vessels. Billy Pitt Woodward was playing somewhat riotously with his little cousins and the dog Pedro, and though several times warned that the space was too limited for such gambols, persevered in the intoxication of his boyish spirits. Elizabeth Spenser happened to be standing within a

foot of the edge, just between the yacht and the smack ; and the boy in passing was pushed against her by the dog. She stumbled, lost her equilibrium, and before any body could grasp her dress, or give any assistance, she fell into the water. A general shriek accompanied the horrid splash. Instantly it was followed by another. A young man had thrown off his coat and plunged after her,—it was Mr. Dawson !

It was gallantly and admirably done. Not two minutes elapsed between the fall and the rescue ; but nothing, of course, was thought of but attention to the almost lifeless girl. She soon, however, came to herself, and was carried by her afflicted uncle (who was almost as skilful in cases of drowning as Doctor Wilkins himself) on board the Gipsy, which was fortunately provided with blankets in sufficient quantity, and several other appliances useful on such occasions. It was a disastrous termination of a day of pleasure, and not the least annoying part of it was the circumstance that the girl's deliverer was the last man in the world whom she would have chosen to owe her life to. But the curate, as soon as he returned upon deck, embraced Dawson (dripping as he was) in the transports of his gratitude, and Mark-

ham and Vivyan agreed that he was a fine bold fellow, after all, and only another Irish anomaly. Sydney pressed his friend to return with him to the parsonage ; but Dawson accepted Mr. Woodward's invitation to go to Redcross in the Caroline. Neither Mrs. Woodward nor Doctor Wilkins thought it prudent to leave Elizabeth. As to Vivyan and Markham, they decided, under the circumstances, to revoke their acceptance of the curate's hospitality for the present, and they passed the night adventurously on the island,—the hares and rabbits their bed-fellows, the heather their pillow, the blue concave their canopy, and the moon their night-lamp.

CHAPTER XXX.

BIVOUAC ON SPENSER ISLAND.

“For now I stand as one upon a rock,
Environed by a wilderness of sea.”

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

“I DON’T apprehend any serious consequences,” said Markham, as he and his cousin walked leisurely back to the place where they had dined; “she seems a hardy as well as a handsome girl, and I never saw or heard of a rescue so prompt—almost so instantaneous; in fact, I scarcely knew which of the party had met with the accident, until I saw her in the arms of that reverend Goliath, who, it appears, is her uncle.”

“I feared she was drowned,” said Vivyan.

“I knew that was impossible,” said Markham; “I have seen cases of the kind more than once.”

“Well, George,” said Frank, after some pause, “if our Irish expedition goes on this

way, it will be romantic enough, at all events."

"But either you or I should have saved the lady," said Markham, "by all the laws of romance."

"Ah, if things would only happen in life as they do in a novel," said Vivyan.

"However," said his cousin, "we have no great reason to murmur, wrecked upon such a picturesque islet as this is, and after a day so full of startling events."

"Such strange men, and such lovely women," added Vivyan; "only think what a charming little realm this was only an hour ago—in the whole female population not a woman who was not a beauty. Even the lady who seemed a governess was decidedly good-looking."

"Handsome, but decidedly not *good*-looking," said Markham. "You mean that fair fierce girl?—she made me think of arsenic."

"A little fierce, certainly," said Vivyan; "but only think, George, what a world this would be, if there was nothing physical but beauty, and nothing moral but love."

"The word moral has a very convenient vagueness in it," said Markham.

"The pleasure in beauty is moral, surely,

essentially moral," said Vivyan, who was at the age when the night and the ocean make young men desperately sentimental.

"Then, if a man admired a plain woman, you would say he was immoral," said Markham.

"Not exactly," said the other; "but, as a general proposition, I maintain that the love of beauty is virtue, and the love of deformity vice."

"Well, it is a vice we need scarcely preach a crusade against," said Markham; "but while we have been talking metaphysics and sentiment, how splendidly the night has advanced upon us!"

"How brilliant the stars are," cried Vivyan; "let us sit down on this smooth rock and gaze on them."

"Like Jessica and Lorenzo," said Markham, who was tolerably well acquainted with Shakspeare; and he that is so has an encyclopedia of poetry in his memory.

"I think I never saw the heavens so glorious as they are to-night," said Vivyan.

"Do you know the names of the constellations, Frank?"

"Only a few," said Vyvian. "I am of Biron's opinion on that subject. Is it not Biron who says,—

“Those earthly godfathers of heaven’s lights,
Who gave a name to every fixed star,
Have no more pleasure in their starry nights
Than those who gaze, and know not what they are.”

They were both mute again for a few moments, their eyes rivetted upon the blazing firmament.

“How solemn, how beautiful, how grand all this is!” exclaimed Vivyan, breaking the silence. “Never shall we forget our first night on the coast of Ireland.”

“Never,” said Markham, deeply feeling the splendour of the scene.

“Had I ten thousand prejudices against the country, George, upon this memorable rock I should abjure them all;—if this island were my property I should have a cottage on it assuredly—but look, the moon rises yonder, let us move towards the beach, and watch the effect upon the water.”

The moon rose that night of a pale gold colour, a flickering causeway of the same delicate tint seemed to traverse the face of the waters from the base of the cliffs to the lower limb of the planet. They made their way out to the extreme point of a lofty ledge of rocks, and seating themselves on the uttermost gray splinter, fancied that they could almost step on the radiant road that terminated trembling at their feet.

“One can’t help believing in the planetary influences,” said Vivyan. “I try in vain of moon-light nights to recollect my astronomy, and think of nothing but the moon’s nodes and librations ; but to no purpose—the poetry still returns, Diana won’t allow me to think of Newton.”

While Frank was thus rhapsodizing, his relation was watching with his keen nautical eye an object upon the water, apparently at about a quarter of a mile from them. He called Vivyan’s attention to it, and in a few moments it was evident that it was a small brig, and that it was standing in right for the island.

“Our adventures, perhaps, are not yet over,” said Vivyan.

“Probably smugglers,” said Markham,—“the wise course is to arm ourselves and be prepared for an attack, at the same time avoiding observation as much as possible.”

They rose, and proceeding to the spot where they had left Lawrence with their arms and other accoutrements, both pacific and warlike, each provided himself with a gun and cutlass, and thus equipped they moved forward amongst the rocks, keeping out of view of the brig, until they found a

convenient station for watching the behaviour of her crew.

Almost immediately a boat left her, rowed by two men, who pulled lustily for the beach, and in a few minutes disappeared in the shadows of the cliffs. Markham and Frank, like Crusoe and Friday, crept as close as they safely could to the spot where the boat seemed disposed to land; but when they saw her again, she was pushing back rapidly to the brig.

Vivyan was for clambering down the rocks and searching for the cave where it seemed likely the free-traders had been depositing some articles of their irregular traffic.

“Not yet,” said Markham, “the boat may return.”

It did return; and now they distinctly saw the men run her into what appeared to be the mouth of a cavern, almost directly under the crags from which the young Englishmen were watching their proceedings. The boat was invisible for about twenty minutes. When she re-appeared, Vivyan could perceive nothing but the sailors who rowed her (the moonbeams glancing on their broad-brimmed glazed hats), but Markham, who had the vision of a falcon, saw that she contained several large wooden cases, to carry off which it was now evident she had been sent ashore.

The young men remained still until the boat returned to the brig. What took place then, the shadows prevented them from observing, but the boat did not come back; on the contrary, the brig weighed anchor, and stood out to sea on a southerly course, as if she intended to make for the port of Galway.

Never did a chamois-hunter in the Bernese Oberland spring from rock to rock with the speed of George Markham, in his eager curiosity to discover the haunts of the pirates, or smugglers, whatever they were, and detect the nature of their operations. He called to Vivyan not to follow him, and indeed there was not much occasion for the remonstrance, the descent was so rugged and perilous (particularly by the faint light of the moon), and Frank was so unused to exploits which his cousin, from his habits of deer-stalking, thought as little of as if he had been bred a smuggler himself.

Markham was soon lost to Vivyan's view, and after some time the latter became uneasy, and followed his footsteps as far as he could with any consideration for his personal safety, shouting at intervals, but receiving no answer. Just as he was beginning to be seriously alarmed, he heard a slight noise

close to him, and he was rejoined by his cousin, who had found a shorter and easier way back than that by which he had descended the cliffs.

“Well,” said Vivyan, “and did you find the cave?”

“I did,” said Markham, looking as if he had discovered something a great deal more surprising.

“And what did you find there, George?”

“A hall of statues, or a sculptor’s studio,” answered Markham, “the light was so bad, I could not decide the question, but I found two marble busts unquestionably.”

“You are jesting,” said Vivyan.

“I am not,” said Markham, “and I can tell you more, I strongly suspect that the cave contains a picture-gallery also. It seems incredible, but it is true, I assure you.”

Frank was disposed to be incredulous,—not very unreasonably,—and Markham, instead of repeating his story, conducted his cousin down the comparatively easy path he had struck upon, and in a few seconds they stood at the mouth of the marvellous cave, the floor of which seemed to be just above the ordinary high-water mark. Had the moon been commodiously situated with

respect to the cavern, or the cavern with respect to the moon, the interior might probably have been accurately surveyed, but the light fell obliquely, and was half interrupted by the rocks upon one side, so that the illumination was very dim and imperfect.

Markham led his cousin by the hand, and stopped at what seemed at first to be a mere lump of white, or grayish stone.

"That's not a bust," said Vivyan.

"Pass your hand over this part of it," said George.

Vivyan did so, and at once confessed that his cousin was in the right.

"Now, come on a little further," said Markham.

Frank followed him, and could hardly discern the next object of vertu to which his attention was called ; but on again applying his hand, there was not a doubt on his mind but that he stood in a museum of the fine arts, strange as it was to find such an institution in such a place.

"Now come this way," said George, "you see I am a capital Cicerone ; but tread cautiously."

Immediately Frank's foot struck against something that returned a hollow sound.

“I thought at first it was a coffin,” said Markham, “but I ascertained the shape ; it is a square box, such as pictures are packed in ; and as the cave contains the works of the chisel, it is only natural to expect a few works of the pencil also.”

“Nothing would surprise me after this,” cried Vivyan. “What a high notion it gives one of the refinement of this part of Ireland to find a contraband trade in statues and pictures carried on so actively.”

“Unfortunately for that view of the matter,” said Markham, “the trade seems to be an export one. I own there is something in this that surprises me extremely. One cannot help suspecting that it is not the rightful owner of these articles who has concealed them here, and who seems to be shipping them off by degrees in this clandestine manner.”

The young men having further searched the cavern, groping with hands and feet, but without succeeding in finding any thing more of consequence, were very glad to find themselves under their lady the moon again, for the air of the cave was extremely cold, and the floor was damp, although not with the influx of the ocean. Fortunately there was no dew upon the heath, which was their

couch that night; and luckily, too, they had abundance of blankets and cloaks above and beneath them, or a cold and a fever might have discouraged their somewhat rash enterprise of sleeping *al fresco* even at Midsummer, in the humid and fickle climate of Ireland.

At break of day, while Lawrence was making their coffee, they hastened back to the cave and found sufficient light to confirm fully all the conjectures they had already made. It then occurred to them to try if they could move the busts and carry them close to the entrance, so as to see what they were. It required all their strength to effect this object, but they ultimately achieved it, and found that one was a bust of Socrates; the other they were not so clear about, but both were apparently well executed, and in the finest Carrara marble. When they returned to examine the wooden box, it was not to be found. The smugglers had carried it off during the night.

After a wild but substantial and various breakfast, the young men decided upon availing themselves of one of the boats of the *Circe*, which they had retained, and pulling over to Redcross to pay their respects to the Woodwards and inquire for Miss

Spenser, for they were not sufficiently acquainted with the coast to have found their way to the parsonage, if they had proposed to make their first visit there.

They found the great and good curate in that extraordinary study of his, and the apartment amused and astonished them as much as its occupier had done the day before. The ruins of a morning meal were scattered over several tables, the chief one not much more than half covered by the cloth, and the curate was sitting amongst them, like Marius in the wreck of Carthage, only that Marius was not employed darning his toga, as Hercules was repairing a rent in his huge pea-jacket, not having his wife to perform that delicate little office for him. The manly simplicity of the rustic clergyman, so cheerful and independent in the midst of his sacred poverty, struck his visitors forcibly. He chased a glossy and corpulent black cat from an oaken chair, to present it to Markham, and dusted a stool with a sleeve of the jacket to make it fit for Vivyan to sit on. Then he flung the jacket aside, and, forgetting that he wanted it on his shoulders, entered lustily into conversation, suffering the cat to jump on his knee, to compensate

her for ejection from the chair. Hercules had a partiality to cats, in common with many other remarkable men (including Tasso and Newton) ; and had surprising stories to tell of their affection as well as their sagacity, contrary to the prevailing opinion with respect to that most domestic of all animals.

The first inquiry of the yachtsmen was, of course, for the lady whom so alarming an accident had befallen. Hercules had been actually preparing to walk over to the rectory, to satisfy himself on the same point, and he was in raptures at the proposition which Markham made to bear him company.

"But will your friend be equal to it?" he asked, compassionately contemplating Vivyan's slender frame, much as Pantagruel may be supposed to have contemplated the pilgrim whom he found in the salad.

"Any thing under ten miles, sir," said Vivyan, smiling.

"Not five, by the route I shall take you," said the curate; "so I'll put on my coat and my shoes, and we'll start immediately."

"I foresee I shall fall in love with this

curate," said Markham, when he left the room. "How odd that Bonham said nothing of him !"

They were not half done admiring the detail of the study, when Mr. Woodward reappeared, wonderfully metamorphosed, for, out of respect to the travellers, he had put on his full black suit. The coat, indeed, was an iron-gray, but he called it his black one and it answered the purpose. His wife was the only person living who thought the clerical dress improved him; and indeed his frame and his features were more in keeping with the garb which he commonly wore on week-days.

"Now," said he, taking down the hat that was intended to match the suit (a low-crowned and broad-leaved one, but nothing of the shovel), "now, gentlemen, let us take the road,—but come, I must provide you with sticks."

"We have been admiring your formidable store of them in the corner," said Markham, smiling.

"Aye," said Hercules, "I'm a stick-fancier. There's a cudgel *there*, I believe, of every wood that a cudgel was ever made of, oak, ash, hazel, holly, blackthorn, and bamboo, and some there have seen service.

Take your choice, but I recommend you, Mr. Vivyan, to choose the bamboo ; you will find it stout enough and light into the bargain."

Vivyan took the curate's advice ; Markham selected a powerful oak-sapling, and Hercules himself sallied forth with the black-thorn.

"And so you actually bivouacked !" said Woodward, as they crossed the court-yard, "that's a thing I never did myself, and I thought I had done most things of that kind."

Markham gave a full account of the night they had passed, and the story of the cave excited the curate's curiosity greatly. It was utterly incomprehensible, and for some time he could talk of nothing else, minutely inquiring into all the circumstances, and framing theory after theory to explain them, then demolishing them himself without mercy. At length the charms of the scenery diverted the conversation into another channel.

The walk was enjoyed prodigiously by all three. The curate was never so vigorous, either in mind or body, as when he was on the hills ; he seemed to grow greater and greater as he got higher and higher ; his

mind became elastic as the turf he strode on; and his heart as expansive as the concave over his head. Markham resembled him in his passion for the heath and his insatiable love of muscular exertion.

"You would make a capital mountain curate," said Hercules, as George kept pace with him manfully, Vivyan lagging a little behind, and thinking that men might be very good pedestrians, without walking quite so fast.

"I fear," said George, "I should have no other qualification but a love for the mountains."

"You would soon begin to love the mountaineers," said Hercules; "the only fault I find with my brother-in-law is that he can't walk,—or won't walk; it comes to the same thing;—but now we are on the brow, and *there* is Redcross Rectory, that white house in the wood, beyond the water."

"How quiet, how very beautiful!" exclaimed Vivyan.

"The descent is nothing," said Woodward, resuming his speed, and giving Frank very little time to admire the prospect, so anxious was he to get news of his niece.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PARSONAGE VISITED.

“In recreations be both wise and free ;
Live still at home, home to thyself, howe’er
Enriched with noble company.”

THE LADY’S TRIAL.

GEORGE MARKHAM was right. Elizabeth Spenser was not the girl to succumb under a couple of minutes’ immersion in cold water; her strong and elegant mind was cased in a frame, which also united elegance with strength. It was as much, indeed, as Carry Woodward could do to keep her in bed the next morning until after breakfast.

“Really,” she said, “my dear aunt, I was not much longer under the water than if I had been bathing; and the water was so beautifully bright!”

“But it’s not pleasant to be ducked with one’s clothes on in the brightest water,” said Carry.

Elizabeth was sitting up in her little dimity-curtained bed, at her breakfast; Aunt Carry sat expanded by her side; the casement was open, the sun was brilliant, the air fresh and balmy, and the long shoots of the monthly roses and woodbine, that covered the front of the house, were flapping every now and then into the room, encumbered with flowers. It was a picture better worth seeing than many a modern cartoon.

A tap at the door. Enter Lucy, curt and ceremonious, with Mrs. Spenser's compliments (that was her style with her step-daughters), to know how Miss Elizabeth felt herself, and would she try just five drops of the "Royal Soothing Restorative," recommended for all cases of sudden fright or over-excitement; indispensable for fires, hurricanes, inundations, and earthquakes, in fact, every disorder in nature, as Carry said, except moving bogs.

Then came the rector himself, kissed his pale daughter affectionately, and received an account from his sister of the agreeable young men whose acquaintance they had made the day before. Mr. Spenser was happy to hear of the safe arrival of the Circe, for he had been anxious about her

fate during the gale. He then mentioned all he knew about Markham and Vivyan, which was not much; but Elizabeth was pleased to learn that the former was the friend of the Bonhams, a circumstance which had not transpired on the previous day. In making new acquaintances it is always agreeable to discover some link or another to connect them with old ones.

Tap the third.—Now it was the head girl of Elizabeth's little school, with an address of condolence from the scholars, in the misfortune of their young mistress, and also to know whether they were to tarry or disperse to their several homes. Carry sent them a cheering account of her niece, and took upon herself to proclaim a truce with popular ignorance for a day or two. It was not often she was so pacific in that way.

Shortly after noon the fair girl rose, the first time for many a day that the meridian sun had seen her head on the pillow; and, still a little weak, leaning on her portly relative, descended to the library, where she found her father on the point of setting out with Doctor Wilkins for Redcross, to thank Mr. Dawson, both in his daughter's name and his own, for his heroic conduct.

"We are all very thankful to him, I am sure," said Mrs. Woodward. What would she not have given, notwithstanding, that her niece's life had been saved by almost any one else in the world?

"You have very good reason," said the doctor, "promptitude is every thing in such cases; minutes count for hours when young ladies are at the bottom of the Atlantic. I am grateful to Mr. Dawson, myself," he added, "for I haven't so many patients in the neighbourhood that I can afford to lose them in so summary a way."

Smiling at the physician's speech, the rector kissed his rescued child, who repaid his smile in the same bright coin, and proceeded to the door, where he had not been standing a minute, before he heard a well-known shout from the water, and saw a boat within a bow-shot of the land, containing the redoubted curate, and two other gentlemen, whom he had never seen before.

Grateful as niece and aunt were to Mr. Dawson, neither regretted that he had not come to receive their acknowledgments in person. It was much more agreeable to see the Englishmen enter. As to Dawson, Mr. Woodward only knew that he had slept the night before at the hotel at Redcross and

had started by an early mail for Dublin. A note, however, which Sydney received from him, gave the important additional information, that his friend had been suddenly summoned to town, in consequence of a vacancy having unexpectedly occurred in the borough which he had for some time past aspired to represent.

Carry welcomed Markham and Vivyan in her radiant, overflowing manner, and Elizabeth as became a maiden receiving agreeable strangers in her father's house; her cheek at the same time almost recovering its wonted colour, that lovely brown with a delicate under-current of carmine in it.

The yachtsmen called to pay a morning visit, and remained the guests of the polished parson many days. Charminglly wild as Tory Island was, and enthusiastic as Markham and Vivyan were about its scenery, and the luxury of the life they had led there, not much persuasion was necessary to induce them to shift their quarters to the cosy and rosy parsonage. Mr. Spenser prevailed on them to promise him a week's sojourn in his pastoral cot; and the Woodward's consented to remain also, Carry having a very discreet nurse, to whom she did not hesitate now and then to confide her brood for a few days; all

but Billy Pitt, who still required her own immediate supervision, and whom she had not yet promoted to the paternal oak, or black-thorn, though strongly tempted to do it by his late pranks on the island.

The parsonage, however, lost a guest that evening in the person of Colonel Dabzac, and nobody but the rector himself was in the least surprised at the circumstances under which his departure took place. He completed the conquest of Miss Spenser on Tory Island, and just before he mounted his horse, he drily asked, and reluctantly received, her father's consent to the match. In fact, there was no valid objection to it. Dabzac was a young man of good fortune, without a stain upon his insipid character, and though very far from being the person whom Mr. Spenser would have chosen for a son-in-law, he was not to allow his own tastes, and still less his own politics, to interfere in a matter of the kind. Besides, Mrs. Spenser highly approved of it, which was enough to settle the question. In short, there never was a matrimonial affair arranged with much less fuss. A not distant wedding-day was provisionally fixed, and Mr. Spenser gave his brother-in-law notice, that

he might not be on his rambles when wanting to tie the knot.

Beauty and gaiety, wit, wine, and worth, made that day's dinner the most charming of domestic convivialities, and it was succeeded by many equally delightful. The custom was (when the elements were propitious), after the removal of the cloth, to enjoy the dessert and wine *al fresco*, in the portico. One of the pastimes on such occasions was the remarkable echo, mentioned early in our story, and which the rector called his oracle, the mode of consulting it being to frame the question so that the last word, or syllable, would be a plausible answer, on the plan of the well-known dialogue of Erasmus.

"Now you shall hear, Mr. Vivyan, how well our Echo understands the state of Ireland."

Then he proceeded to catechise the nymph as follows, taking care to pronounce the final words of each sentence in a sufficiently loud tone.

What is the chief source of the evils of Ireland? *Echo*—Land.

What is the state of Munster?—Stir.

What are they doing in Connaught?—Naught.

Why don't they reclaim their morasses ?

—Asses.

Should we not excite them to industry ?

—Try.

Inform us what the derivation of Erin is ?

—Erinnys.

Then the curate, with his stentorian lungs, proposed the following interrogatories, shaped with a view to show that the Echo was of his way of thinking.

What would you give the Catholics ?—
Licks.

Who best deserves a fat rectory ?—Tory.

But the Echo answered questions of another kind, equally to the satisfaction of the company; for, on being asked

“In what wine shall we drink the health of Colonel Dabzac ?” the airy tongue replied, with the same promptitude and sharp distinctness—“Sack.”

It made an amusing variety in an Irish night's entertainments ; and, what with a lively tea, a little music, and another hour's miscellaneous conversation, the rector had every reason to think that the first day was a tolerably successful one.

At breakfast the ensuing morning a singular discovery was made, which connected Vivyan in a way none of the most agreeable

with the fortunes of the Spensers. This was nothing less than the fact that the principal part of the money of which Maguire had been robbed consisted of the rents of Vivyan's small Irish estate, to which it turned out that the little proctor was bailiff, or collector. These were the rents which Maguire had received at Mr. Branagan's inn, near Castle Dawson, when he was surprised counting his money, as has been related in a former chapter.

"A provoking discovery for a landlord to make on his first visit to his property," said the rector.

"Perhaps only a fit punishment for his not having visited it before," said Vivyan, smiling, although the loss of so much money was no laughing matter to a young man with his limited income.

"You deserve extremely little credit for visiting it now," said Markham; "only for this unfortunate affair, you would probably never have known that your estate lay in this part of the country."

"It must be submitted to, I suppose," said the easy Frank, "as a sort of local absentee-tax."

"You take the loss of a gale of rent very coolly," said his friend; "but since we are

on the spot, we must use our best exertions, in conjunction with Mr. Spenser, to probe this business to the bottom."

The curate was delighted with Markham's energy; it was a quality which he possessed himself in almost a superabundant degree; so he declared his readiness to co-operate in any plan that might be agreed on (and the more prompt and strenuous the better) to discover the offenders, and bring them to justice. The parties who seemed apathetic and remiss were the rector and Vivyan, the principal losers in the transaction. The former thought that every thing that was right to be done would be done by the police and the authorities, while the latter seemed infinitely to prefer the pleasures of boating, sauntering, and chatting with Mrs. Woodward and the Spenser girls, to the fatiguing amusement of hunting bandits through the mountains. The weather, however, was now exceedingly warm, so that for several days nothing was attempted, even by the energetic part of the company, which could give the most sensitive malefactor in the country the slightest uneasiness for his personal safety.

One of those sultry days was agreeably spent in a second party to the island, to which

the discoveries of the strangers had attached a new interest almost as great as if they had found an Herculaneum there. No accident threw a shade over that day's pastime ; not even Carry slipped on the verdant slope, the muscular Markham sustained her so ably. The breeze palliated the heat ; there were no guns to scare and slaughter the *feræ naturæ* ; all disagreeable thoughts and disagreeable people were left behind. As to Sydney Spenser, nobody knew where he was that day, but this was no uncommon occurrence ; and displeased only Elizabeth and Mrs. Woodward, who were always anxious to keep him in the safe circle of his friends, however little the pleasure they derived from his company. The truth was, that Sydney's spirits had just received a serious shock, which unfitted him for partaking in any social enjoyment ; he had seen the clever sketch drawn by his uncle for the guidance of the police, and had recognised with horror the tall ruffian with whom he had dined at Castle Dawson. He had also inspected the paper found at the Black Castle ; and though he could make nothing of the writing in ink, the pencilling, faint as it was, bore a striking resemblance to his friend's hand.

The party scarcely expected to find the

busts still in the cavern, it seemed so likely that the brig would have completed her business, but, whatever the cause was, Socrates and Mirabeau were found just where the yachtsmen had left them, gazing with their lack-lustre eyes on the Atlantic, which had evidently risen to do them homage, for a wreath of sea-wrack was twisted round the brawny neck of the French orator, and the claw of a crab was sticking in the forehead of the philosopher. The latter incident caused great merriment, for the rector insisted it was one of the fingers of Xantippe, and ought not to be removed upon any account.

In order to show the ladies the wonders of art which their favourite island contained, the curate performed one of his great feats of bodily strength. Markham suggested that as the women could not come down to the grotto, the contents of the grotto should be carried up to them.

“By all means,” said the curate, “do you carry the Frenchman, and I’ll carry the Athenian.”

Markham and Vivyan together had with difficulty moved the busts from the interior of the cave to its mouth, but, nevertheless, the former had no doubt but that he could do what Hercules proposed. Now, however, he had not only to bear the load a greater distance, but he had to carry it up a steep and broken path. He carried Mirabeau about a third of the way, and was then very glad to deposit him on a shelf of the rock. The curate then cried "Come, old fellow!" addressing the marble Socrates, and heaving him up in his brawny arms, he strode up the precipitous ascent, and never paused until he deposited the bust at the feet of his wife, who was sitting with her nieces in the heather. Markham was loud in his applause, and acknowledged that Mr. Woodward was the most powerful man he had ever met with. But the curate was not satisfied with this ; he went down the rocks again and completed the task that Markham had left unfinished, after which, indeed, he was glad to stretch his giantship on the turf, and refresh himself with beef and mustard.

They puzzled themselves in vain, during their repast (for a visit to the island always implied dining there), to frame some plausible theory to account for the mysterious apparition of Art in the wildest domains of Nature ; but it is no disparagement to their sagacity to relate that the shrewdest guesses were wide of the mark.

What to do with the spoil was the next question. Mr. Spenser decided it sensibly and promptly ; the presumption was, he said, that the marbles had not been brought from the main land for honest purposes, or by honest people, and consequently it was his duty (especially as he was a magistrate) to take possession of them in the name of the law, until the rightful owners should appear to claim them. This opinion having been received with general approbation, the crew of the Gipsy were sent for, and it was as much as four lusty seamen could do to transport the busts on board the cutter. The rector was excessively amusing all the way back on the subject of Socrates and Xantippe, and said, amongst other things, that "it was

very hard on the philosopher to have had two demons," implying, of course, that Mrs. Socrates was *one*.

"*One* is quite enough for any man, even for a philosopher," said Markham.

"As my poor brother knows to his cost," said Mrs. Woodward, *sotto voce*, to her husband.

"Well," replied Hercules, in the same tone, "she has allowed Val one pleasant day at all events."

"And how he has enjoyed it!" said Carry.

That same evening the busts were enrolled with those of Burke, Grattan, Fox, and Curran, in the rector's elegant library. He happened to possess two vacant scagliola pillars, to one of which he elevated Socrates, and promoted Mirabeau to the other, placing the latter by the side of Mr. Fox, whom he resembled in the fervour of his character and the impetuosity and abundance of his eloquence.

The rector had, indeed, spent a happy day, and he continued comparatively tran-

quail, as long as his application to the government for troops remained unanswered. The longer the reply was delayed, his wife, though fidgety, continued to cherish stronger and stronger hopes that her wishes would be liberally complied with. At length arrived the official letter with its huge seal, and if Mrs. Spenser was the most disappointed, her husband was certainly the most astonished at its contents.

It ran as follows:

“ Dublin Castle, July 17, —31.

“ Sir,

“ In reply to your letter of the 5th instant, applying to the Government for military aid to protect your house and property from attacks which you seem to apprehend (without, perhaps, sufficient grounds, considering the general tranquillity of the county in which you reside), I am commanded by the Lord Lieutenant to state that His Excellency considers the safety of the district in question amply provided for by the police-force stationed there, supported as it is by the troops quartered at Letterkenny and other

towns at no great distance ; but *under no circumstances whatsoever could His Excellency consent to allow artillery to be employed for the defence of a private house*, even that of a clergyman of the Established Church.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient humble servant,

* * *

“ To the Rev. Valentine Spenser,
Redcross Rectory, Redcross.”

Conceive the rector's amazement on reading this !—He had never said one word of artillery in his letter. It was an after-thought of his wife's, which she had added in a post-script, without acquainting him with what she had done.

B O O K VII.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PRELIMINARY CONQUESTS.

“Folk that loved idlenesse,
And not delite in no kind businesse,
But for to hunt and hawke and pley in medes,
And many other such like ydle dedes.”

THE FLOURE AND THE LEAFE.

THE curate and Markham soon fraternised ; not in the shallow sentimental way of French or Irish clubbists, but honestly, heartily, as one brave man should cleave and cotton to another. They both loved sport and exercise, and both abhorred a sedentary life. Woodward excelled Markham in physical strength ; but the latter had the advantage in every thing that required skill and address. The curate was

the better pedestrian, Markham was the better horseman. Markham was a better shot with a rifle; but the curate killed more hares and rabbits in a given time. The curate was as poorly armed for the field, the moor, or the loch, as any sportsman could possibly be,—a rusty single-barrelled gun, a powder-horn and shot-bag which had been worn at the fight of the Boyne, a wicker-basket instead of a game-bag, and dogs that set at grouse and partridge when they met with them, but took the same polite notice of larks, corn-crakes, and water-wagtails. Now Markham piqued himself upon the completeness and accuracy of his accoutrements. He could afford to spend the double of Mr. Woodward's income upon his sporting apparatus; his gun never missed fire, his rifle was infallible, his fishing-tackle was perfect, and his dogs knew what was game, and what was not, as well as if they read the *Sporting Magazine*, or had assisted in passing the game-laws. It was wonderful what execution Hercules did with his deficient machinery, and how

close he trod on the heels of Markham, who had every sportsmanlike equipment, and made the expertest and ablest use of them. Had it not been for Mr. Woodward, it is possible that Markham might have felt his time hanging somewhat heavily on his hands at the parsonage ; his tastes were so widely different from his cousin's, who seemed to have found in the rector and his family the exact kind of society and kind of life which by its freedom from restraint, and its intellectual cultivation, was best adapted to his temperament and his talents.

The life, indeed, which Vivyan now led was almost as happy a form of existence as he had ever imagined in his castle-buildings. The rector's conversation, combining classic taste with polished pleasantry, various, discursive, fanciful, suggestive, with a strain of seriousness in its gaiety, and most sparkling when it was most solid, exercised a powerful fascination over all who had the faculty to appreciate it. His beautiful and luxurious library was just the place for an indolent lover of books like Frank to revel,

or repose in. Out of doors were the Oreads and the Naiads, if his fancy led him to wander on the hills, or loiter along the warbling brooks, or sonorous torrents ; and within doors, when the sun or the showers interdicted roaming, in the company of his new female acquaintances he had only a too charming and accessible resource, if ever he was threatened with *ennui*. Thus was every thing propitious to the intensest enjoyment that the eye, the ear, the mind, or the fancy was capable of ; and intensely did Vivyan enjoy every thing, as oblivious of Cambridge as if he had been born to a dukedom, and as thoughtless of the pecuniary loss he had sustained (amounting to half of his slender income,) as if he had been as rich as Mr. D'Israeli's marvellous Jew.

But it was not in the nature of Vivyan to be happy himself, without being the cause of happiness to those who made him so. He was never so captivating as to those by whom he was captivated. His first Irish success was with the no less benign than intellectual Carry Woodward. His second victory

was over the rector himself. He resembled Mr. Spenser remarkably in the delicate qualities of his mind, and not a little also in the ease and softness of his character. Mr. Spenser, when at College, must have been just such an engaging young man. How painfully he was struck with the contrast between Vivyan and his own son ! Yet he had the gratification, not unmingled with considerable surprise, of observing that Sydney, though so rustic and unlettered, so inferior to Frank in all respects, and particularly in manners and conversation, seemed not unsmitten by his attractions any more than other people. In fact, singular though it may seem, Vivyan made a most decided conquest of Sydney Spenser ; and his sister Elizabeth and his aunt Woodward observed it with the liveliest satisfaction. Just about this time a certain thoughtfulness, and even gloom, was becoming visible in Sydney's looks and demeanour ; and his relatives were glad to perceive the change, attributing it to the revolution of sentiment produced by the contrast between his new acquaintance and his old associates. It was not an unnatural

explanation, but unhappily it was not the right one.

It was certain, however, that Sydney was smitten deeply by the daily contemplation, in a young man not much his senior, of those accomplishments and graces in which he was himself so sadly deficient. Probably it was partly owing to the depression of spirits under which he manifestly now laboured that Markham did not attract him more than his cousin ; Markham, who was so athletic, so renowned with the rifle, so skilled in all manly sports and exercises, while Vivyan had so little in common with young Spenser, in fact, nothing but the love of pleasure—and in their ideas of what constituted pleasure they differed as widely as in any thing else. But Markham, though not so fastidious as his friend, was less careful to conceal any dislike that he conceived ; and having been from the first disgusted with Sydney, he continued to manifest his feeling by a reserve and dryness of manner which kept young Spenser at a severe distance, and disposed him doubly in Vivyan's favour. On the other hand, the extreme placidity and benevolence of the

latter, indeed his better breeding, made him totally incapable of repelling the advances made by the son of his host, and the brother and nephew of the charming women, with whom he laughed and chatted the live-long day. Then the management of women, the most artless women, is so clever ! Bent upon availing herself of the present occasion to produce a beneficial impression upon her brother, Elizabeth, carefully concealing her design, not only encouraged his attempts to converse with Vivyan, but created opportunities for him, brought him forward at favourable moments, and threw a timely shield over his coarseness or ignorance, when she feared he was on the point of committing himself in some alarming way. She had no very great difficulty now to make him appear at dinner in the costume of society ; his attire in the morning was of less moment, particularly as the prevailing taste was for the sailor's jacket, or the shooting-coat. Indeed, Markham retained his naval dress, though Vivyan laid his aside, and resumed the ordinary garb of a man who was neither soldier, sailor, or

sportsman, but a plain citizen of the world. Markham was astonished to observe how tolerant Vivyan seemed to be of a degree of uncouthness and rusticity which he himself found so offensive.

"He seems brave and good-natured," said Frank; "we must put him down amongst our anomalies."

"In the same class with Mr. Dawson; they may be very brave fellows, both of them, but they are very bad company, nevertheless."

"Young Spenser has the advantage," said Frank; "he seems to have run wild, and to have lived in a society quite different from that in which his family moves, but his father talks of sending him to Cambridge; we'll civilise and polish him there, depend upon it."

"My dear Frank," said his friend, in the tone of remonstrance, "don't engage yourself for a bear-herd. Very well to see every thing on one's travels; very well to peep at bears in a pit, but to undertake to lead and teach them to dance is neither a very creditable employment, nor a very safe one."

Vivyan laughed.

"What I mean is, Frank," continued his

friend, "that I would not have you involve yourself with loutish fellows in Ireland, whom you may find it difficult to shake off, when you return to England."

"But what a fascinating family this is!" said Vivyan.

"Fascinating people," replied Markham, "with relatives and friends who are just the reverse. Just be a little guarded—I ask no more."

Vivyan promised.

But circumstances threw young Spenser more into companionship with Frank than with the other stranger. Mr. Spenser was sometimes entirely engrossed by his demon-wife, torn from his books, his children, and the society of his guests. Hercules and Markham frequently paired off together upon some prodigious undertaking, far transcending Vivyan's or even Sydney's pedestrian powers. At such times Aunt Carry, her nieces, or one or other of them, with Vivyan and her nephew, would set out, assisted, perhaps, by a jaunting-car, on a quieter expedition, with generally some little object in view, a lake, a waterfall, or some interesting remnant of

other days. Carry, you may suppose from her tonnage, was no great pedestrian, and got particularly soon knocked up when there was much up-hill work, as there commonly is (topographers agree) in a highland region. Then she and Arabella would sometimes return and leave Elizabeth and the two young men to pursue their ramble ; or, when the object was too distant, or the day too sultry, all the ladies would give it up in despair, and creep back to the parsonage, escorted perhaps by Billy Pitt, while Vivyan and Sydney would proceed to accomplish the purpose of the day.

Vivyan, indeed, would almost always have preferred returning with Mrs. Woodward and her nieces, for he much preferred young women to old castles, and Carry's conversation infinitely to her nephew's ; but Carry would not allow it, and Sydney, sometimes recovering his buoyant and too riotous spirits, was eager to show his visitor what was to be seen in the country, and was perhaps, moreover, not disinclined to try the young Cantab's mettle over the mountains of Tyrconnell.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PIG-DRIVING.

“ Believe me, sir,
That government is no holiday employment,
No velvet couch, or journey over flowers,
But a laborious, rugged, uphill task,
Demanding god-like force and faculties,
A righteous hand to wield the sword of justice,
A vigorous arm to hold her balance even,
Deep knowledge, old experience, high courage,
The hands of Briareus and the eyes of Argus.”

NEW PLAY.

It blew a stiff gale for a couple of days about this time, and the party had a most agreeable excursion on horseback to view the ocean; it was the same ride which the Spensers had before taken with Colonel Dabzac, after the memorable storm with which these chronicles commenced. Carry did not often ride, and, when she did, it was a great event, and caused a sensation in the stables, and much pleasant remark every-

where. The rector had a fine old glossy black mare—a formal, sleek, monastic animal, with a long tail and a broad back, strong and steady as an elephant, and this was the mare that Aunt Carry rode. The rector and Markham helped her to the saddle, where, when she was seated, she looked like some Amazon queen, save that she was slightly nervous, and, if fierce at all, only fierce with timidity. Mr. Spenser guarded her on the right flank, George Markham on the left, and Arabella, Elizabeth, and Vivyan brought up the rear. The pace of the black mare regulated the pace of the whole party. She was just the sort of discreet and solemn creature that you read of in Spanish novels, ambling under comely priests, mitred abbots, or other such sacred burdens.

“You have immense water-power,” said Markham, “in this country.” The hills were pouring down torrents all round their line of march, making wild loud music to the ear, and sometimes taking dashing leaps over the rocks, forming picturesque water-falls.

“And wind-power, too,” said Elizabeth, smiling. The zephyrs were playing with her hair and riding-dress somewhat rudely

“ Yet I see no mills,” continued Markham.
 “ You do not seem to turn your advantages to account.”

It pained the rector to be for ever censuring and complaining of the country, and it was with a very serious and almost melancholy tone he said, in reply to Markham’s observation,

“ Our very winds and waters are idle ; not a wheel is turning within twenty miles of this spot. In other countries man revenges himself on the elements by making them do work enough to compensate for all their ravages ; but here the flood and the storm are our absolute masters. We are deluged one day, and blown off our legs the next, without the satisfaction of punishing a single ruffian blast, or lawless torrent, by setting them to turn a mill.”

They had now gained the point that commanded the view of the ocean, and its imposing splendour abruptly terminated the conversation.

“ A more agreeable way, this, to enjoy the commotion of the waves than from the deck of the *Circe*,” said the rector, breaking the silence, and addressing Markham.

“I have no wish whatever to be afloat in that swell,” said George, “I feel quite content upon terra firma.”

“And I’ll answer for my aunt,” said Sydney ; “she prefers riding the black mare to riding the billows, any day.”

It was the first observation Sydney made during the ride.

Carry assented, and said she feared America would never have been discovered if Columbus had left the adventure to her ; but she had no objection to a short cruise in very smooth water ; and to witness the agitation of the deep from a safe position on shore, she thought a pleasure of a very high order.

The Atlantic was indeed a glorious spectacle that day. The waves thundered in the caverns, and hurled the spray in clouds over the tops of the cliffs, tossing the shells and sea-weed amongst the heather, and impregnating with saline particles the whole atmosphere. The shattered crests of the billows, as the sun glanced upon them, looked like mountains of crystal smashed into dazzling fragments by invisible sledges ; and innumerable rainbows (combining the love-

liest with the most formidable objects in nature) beautified the terror of the scene. They approached as near as was consistent with safety to the edges of the crags, to peep into the anarchy of the waters, where it was most triumphant; how they boiled and tumbled, as if seething in the crater of a volcano, and as if rocks of adamant could oppose but poor resistance to their fury. Here and there were enormous insulated masses of the fallen cliff, which the retiring breakers for a moment left totally uncovered, and then, recollecting their wrath, returned with fearful energy, and left not a stone unsubmerged large enough for a cormorant to perch on. In one or two instances it happened that the points of rock were sufficiently lofty to escape all but the mere spray of the insurgent flood, and these points had been seized upon by the most daring of the sea-fowl, who screamed defiance of the threatening surf, well knowing, perhaps, (feathered soothsayers that they are), by their unerring instincts, that its threats were impotent, as the exhausted winds were retiring from the fray. It looked as if the ocean would never be at peace again, as if Halcyon would

never brood on its bosom more. Nothing that ever carried oar or sail could live an instant in a sea like that, to whose prodigious violence the destruction of the noblest ship that ever carried the flag of a Nelson or a Napier would have been no greater feat upon such a coast, than the cracking of an egg-shell or a vase.

They returned through Redcross, and the Englishmen had an opportunity of observing the municipal curiosities of that distinguished and important place.

“You see, Mr. Markham,” said the rector, as they rode through the streets, “if we don’t manure our fields in this country, we manure our streets liberally.”

Markham smiled, and said that undoubtedly a commerce in manure might be established with great advantage between town and country. The rector then was pleasant on pigs. He compared the government of Ireland to pig-driving, and said that the Lord-Lieutenant was the Schwein-General.

“You will find,” he observed, “parallels in the Irish population to every variety of the pig species, as they are enumerated so humorously by Sir Francis Head in his ‘Bub-

bles.' The pigs 'with a jaded care-worn appearance, evidently leaving behind them a numerous litter,' how only too easy it is to find their exact human likenesses! Then, there is 'the great, tall, monastic, melancholy-looking creature, which seems to have no other object left in this wretched world than to become bacon,'—there, Mr. Markham, yonder is just such an animal upon two legs. And look at that group of my young parishioners disporting themselves on their patrimonial dunghill!—in them you see the 'thin, tiny, brisk, petulant piglings, with the world and all its loves and sorrows before them.'"

Had there been a Young Ireland at the period of this conversation, how forcibly Mr. Spenser would have been struck by the resemblance of the "tiny, brisk, petulant pigling" to the members of that party!

"*Noscitur à sociis*, would appear to be extremely applicable in the present instance," said Vivyan.

"Well," said the curate's bouncing wife, who loved the people with all their faults, and, indeed, devoted much of her time and thoughts to improve them. "Well, but we

must not be too hard upon the swinish multitude ; I assure you, Mr. Vivyan, there is a reformation going on, and we are growing less and less piggish every day."

"The pig is excellent, when *cured*," said the rector, "but it is a perverse, grunting, bristling animal; and to drive it requires great tact and patience inexhaustible, a quick eye, and a strong hand ; you must be willing to encourage, and you must be prepared to goad. The worst, too, of the office of Schwein-General of Ireland is that he is not the *only* drover; there are other drovers, unfortunately, who are quite as disorderly and swinish as the herd itself; the agitator drives one way with his shillelagh, the bishop another with his crozier, the agrarian captain with his pike, the orange ringleader with his bayonet. The Schwein-General has to drive the drovers as well as the drove, and that is an arduous duty for the swine-herd of a people."

It was an unlucky day for the poor citizens of Redcross, for, as the party rode through that part of the town, which the McSwynes principally occupied, and where

the houses were generally thatched, a most diverting and surprising scene presented itself. The inhabitants were observed, some perched like birds, others lying on their faces, upon the roofs of their humble dwellings; for what purpose the Englishmen tried in vain to conjecture.

“It is an oriental custom,” said Markham, “and perhaps confirms what I have heard stated, that the Irish are of Eastern and Hebrew origin.”

The Spensers smiled at this learned solution, but Vivyan naturally wondered how they could enjoy this house-top recreation in such a high wind.

“Why don’t they come down,” he asked, “until the gale abates a little?”

“On the contrary,” said Mr. Spenser, “they will never come down while the gale lasts; if they did, their roofs would be blown into the air.”

He then explained to his amazed guests this singular usage of the McSwynes, who prefer keeping their thatch steady in stormy weather with the *vis inertiae* of their own bodies, to taking the trouble of putting it in

a state of permanent security by any mechanical means.

“It shows a degree of passive industry, and also fortitude,” said Markham, “which cannot be too much admired.”

“You hit the truth exactly,” said the rector, “if the virtues of these poor fellows were only *active* instead of *passive*, they would be one of the finest races in the world.”

“But what is it,” said Vivyan, “after all, but an old school of philosophy revived, the sect of the Cynics.”

“Very true,” said Mr. Spenser; “I have no doubt but Diogenes was an Irishman.”

“Or a native of Higgledy-Piggledy,” said Mrs. Woodward. “By-the-bye, Valentine, you must show our English friends your history of that country.”

Carry herself read it that evening after dinner for the entertainment of the company. Mr. Spenser made amusing strictures upon his own performance, and was never once interrupted during the reading of it by a summons from his wife.

It was never well understood what kept

Mrs. Spenser so quiet, and made her so inoffensive, as she was during this last fit of tempestuous weather, and indeed during the greater part of the time passed by Markham and Vivyan at the parsonage. The rector, certainly, had not enjoyed so much tranquillity for some years. What made his wife's good behaviour at this period the more singular was that Doctor Wilkins now, for the first time, pronounced her case to be one requiring regular medical treatment. Her irritable and discontented disposition had, at length, in his opinion, produced a morbid state of the nervous system, which might contain the seeds of more than one serious disorder, and which, therefore, required to be watched with care. He recommended as much amusement and as little medicine as possible ; made her a present himself of a macaw, and gave Miss M'Cracken a number of private directions for her management, one of which was to be as sparing as possible of artificial means to produce sleep. Indeed, his orders were, that no opiate of any kind should be administered without express directions from himself ; but upon

this point it would seem that Lucy differed in opinion from Doctor Wilkins, for she continued in secret the same liberal use of morphine which she had hitherto found so convenient, taking care, however, not to supply herself with it at the shop of Mr. Spenser's apothecary. No doubt, the firmness of the governess in persevering in her own system, though contrary to the doctor's prescription, contributed not a little to keep Mrs. Spenser in order ; but other circumstances were favourable likewise. If she was denied a military force for her protection, she soon had the satisfaction, as we shall see presently, of having the little garrison of police restored, and she not only took a great fancy to George Markham, but discovered that she was related to him on the maternal side, and opened a correspondence with Mrs. Markham at Paris, on millinery and mesmerism, gloves, poodles, bon-bons, and Angora cats, which filled up many a vacant hour, and promised a little harvest of Christmas presents and New-year's gifts, which no child in the nursery was fonder of receiving.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MODEL FARM.

“ Intereunt segetes ; subit aspera sylva,
Lappæque, tribulique ; interque nitentia culta
Infelix lolium, et steriles dominantur avenæ.”

THE GEORGICS.

THE curate could never be prevailed on to write a sermon, or even to set about the mental composition of one, until towards the close of the week, seldom, indeed, until Saturday morning. His plan then was to take one of his bludgeons in his hand, and wander out alone, either along the cliffs, near Red-cross, or over the adjacent mountains, when the cattle might sometimes be seen scudding before him, terrified by his vociferous preparations to preach the gospel of peace on the following day.

Hercules disappeared one Saturday morning after breakfast, and Carry made no secret of the cause of his absence. The day was then spent by the remaining gentlemen in a little agricultural survey of the neighbourhood, so that the present chapter, being georgical and bucolical, will probably be skipped by those readers who want nothing in a novel but love and mischief, comedy or tragedy, forgetting that human life has something corresponding to every form of the drama, and, amongst the rest, to those enumerated by Polonius as "pastoral-comical and historical-pastoral," under either of which heads you are free to class this chapter, or under both if you please.

As Markham was something of a farmer as well as a sportsman, you may fancy how he was amused and interested by what he saw in Donegal. Indeed, he saw a great deal that was instructive as well as entertaining, for bad examples have their uses as well as good ones, and in this way some of the Donegal farmers were as good preceptors as Coke of Norfolk, or Smith of Deanston.

Mr. Spenser, too, was a husbandman after a fashion. The history, literature, and poetry of agriculture seized on his imagination, and led him to take a kind of scholarlike concern even in its practical details. He had some original English principles on the subject, but he had lived so long in Ireland that he was growing rather loose in his practice, partly in consequence of the general law, which makes popular systems and habits triumph over conflicting individual efforts, partly through his innate and invincible indolence, a quality in which he was much more of a Celt, than a Saxon or Norman.

Compared, however, with the majority of farms through the neighbourhood, the glebe lands exhibited a very superior tillage; the principle of rotation was evidently recognised and acted on; the farm-buildings were in tolerable order; draining was attended to; manure was economised; and there was none of that wretched confederacy of sloth, nastiness, and poverty, which, wherever it prevails, strips the name of husbandman of every agreeable and picturesque association.

"I need not ask, Mr. Spenser, if you are a farmer," said Markham to the rector, as they rode about one day together, accompanied, as it happened, by Vivyan,—“your lands show it plainly enough.”

“Ah, they do not deserve so much praise,” replied the clergyman. “I take some interest in agriculture without being an agriculturist; I sometimes think that if Virgil had not written the Georgics, I should never have known a a plough from a spade, or a heifer from a kid.”

“How poetry has exalted and beautified the subject!” said Vivyan.

“Yes,” said the rector, “Virgil has wreathed the handle of the plough with flowers,—but, in truth, the subject has an intrinsic dignity and charm which naturally recommended it to so great and so wise a poet. The merest utilitarian, the most prosaic Benthamite, must admit the practical value of the Georgics.”

“They were the work of a great poet,” remarked Vivyan, “writing at the suggestion of a great statesman.”

“And the state of Italy when they were written, wasted with civil wars and commotions, bore considerable resemblance,” said the rector, “to that of Ireland at present. It were idle to expect a second Virgil in the same field, but it is not too much to hope that a minister may yet arise, who, with the spirit and sagacity of Mæcenas, may give the impulse so much wanting to the rural industry of this fine island.”

“It were devoutly to be wished,” said Markham. “What strikes me as so curious is, that having always heard Ireland described as a country essentially agricultural, I find, on coming here, that if there is one pursuit more despised and neglected than another, it is the cultivation of the soil.”

“Shamefully true,” said the clergyman; “I am Irishman enough to be ashamed of it. Had we your inexhaustible coal-fields, we should, doubtless, be equally neglectful of manufactures. Then, perhaps, we should take to the plough and the harrow. *Optat ephippia bos piger.*”

“The Irish, of all classes, it seems to me,”

said Markham, "attach over much importance to legislative reforms, instead of applying their minds to improvements within their own reach and power."

"Yes," said Mr. Spenser; "but it is also true that the legislature, by deferring measures of obvious justice, divert the public mind from the species of improvements you allude to, and delay the hour of self-amelioration. The people are foolish, and their rulers are too often no wiser."

"That doctrine seems to lead to the repeal of the union," said Vivyan.

"No," said Mr. Spenser, smiling; "I do not see that it does. When an English government is merely foolish, an Irish one would be stark mad; mal-administration is much better than anarchy; the frying-pan is uncomfortable, but the fire is much more so. Let ill alone may be sound policy, when ill can only be changed for worse."

"Besides," said Markham, "a more liberal spirit is growing up daily in the governing classes in England."

"Unquestionably," said the rector; "but

at the same time I see such an abundant crop of evils on all sides (like that crop of weeds yonder), so much ignorance, so much prejudice, so much passion, so many sinister interests, so little truth or patriotism in popular leaders, so little courage in statesmen, such enormous abuses to be reformed, and such a dearth of moral power to grapple with them, that I confess myself one of those who think the regeneration of Ireland will be a very slow process ; and I think it is important to keep this steadily in view, for there is nothing leads to despondency so much as indulging in over-sanguine expectations. I do not despair ; but the deliverance I see is afar off."

"I perceive no green crops anywhere but on your own ground," said Markham, bringing the conversation back to Georgical matters.

"No," said the rector, "neither my precept nor my example has ever produced a single turnip beyond the precincts of my own farm. I do not predict that any one will ever induce the Irish peasantry to grow tur-

nips, or cease to scourge the earth for grain-crops, but whoever does will be a Mæcnas indeed."

"Then you think, sir," said Vivyan, "that the glory is reserved for a minister?"

"I am positive, Mr. Vivyan, that enormous good would be effected by a statesman who would but conceive the idea of making himself Farmer-General as well as Governor-General of Ireland—who would aim at making his rule illustrious, neither by the glitter of the bayonet, nor even by the flashing of the sword of justice, but by the splendour of the ploughshare burnished by the clod."

"I have somewhere read," said Vivyan, "that the Emperor of China is annually informed of the husbandman who has distinguished himself most in the culture of the soil ; and he makes him a mandarin of a certain order."

"The idea might be adopted," said the rector, "with great advantage ; and I am reminded of an observation of Montesquieu, that lazy nations are generally proud, and

that the effect might be turned against the cause, and laziness be extirpated by bringing the feeling of pride into play. But no !—it is not on the improvers of society and the benefactors of mankind that our governments bestow their rewards.”

“Perhaps,” said Vivyan, “when your Mæcenias appears, to raise with his potent hand the drooping agriculture of Ireland, this idea may occur to him, and we may see the fountain of honour in the crown playing on worthier objects than those who are now usually sprinkled with it. We shall have an order of the plough, perhaps, or something of the kind.”

“There’s a farmer, yonder,” said Markham, laughing, “who is well entitled to be decorated with the order of the thistle. I think I never saw so fine a crop of thistles in my life as he has raised in that field to the left of his cottage.”

“Magnificent,” said the rector; “but you must know, that is what we call our model-farm. You will see exhibited there the entire system of our Celtic husbandry in per-

fection, with the solitary exception of ploughing by the tail, which it is surprising farmer M'Swyne has not returned to."

"The land is not bad," said Markham.

"By no means; some of the best in this parish; that is the beauty of it," replied Mr. Spenser,—“but I see the model-husbandman himself digging yonder; let us dismount, and walk over to him.”

They left their horses with the grooms, and entered the fields. Vivyan plucked a superb thistle, as he moved along, and remarked, that as a cultivator of wild-flowers, the farmer was entitled to much praise.

Roger M'Swyne was a model farmer, indeed. He would have been a saint in the Indian theology, which places human perfection in a state of the utmost inactivity. He was at work, but his work was as like relaxation as one egg is to another; he dug passively; his sinews were unbraced, and so were his nether garments. Like Canning's knife-grinder,

—— “his hat had got a hole in't,
“So had his breeches.”

But he was very civil and good-humoured, gratified at being visited and talked to, with a great deal of natural politeness and plenty of "God bless you's." Markham observed with intense curiosity Roger's manner of digging. At what a very acute angle the spade entered the ground, just scratching the old face of mother Terra, as if to elude as far as possible the original blessed curse of labour. Not more than six inches of the spade were bright with the friction ; the rest was as rusty as you could wish the soldier's bayonet or the rebel's pike to be.

"Why, Mr. M'Swyne," said Markham, "you don't call *that* digging, do you ?—why don't you go down deeper ?"

"Och, then," replied the pattern agriculturist, "is it deeper your honour says ?—sure there isn't a man in the townland giving his bit of ground such a diggin."

Markham gently took the spade out of his hands, put it almost perpendicularly into the earth, stood up straight to it, pressing it down with a strenuous exertion of the muscles of his right foot, and turned up thir-

teen or fourteen inches of new virgin soil.

"Now, *there* is a spade-full of earth," said Mr. Spenser, "that never saw the sun before since the creation of the world."

Roger gazed with a comic expression of indolent wonder at the phenomenon of Markham's exploit, and the result of it.

"That's what we call digging in England," said Markham, returning the spade.

"Och, then it is diggin'," said Roger, shrugging his broad shoulders, the chief use he made of them.

"Why, man," continued the young Englishman, "there's gold under those acres of yours, if you would only dig for it."

"There's gold's worth at any rate," replied the farmer, who perfectly understood the metaphor, not being at all defective in intelligence.

"Your thistles, Roger," said Vivyan, too pleasantly to be at all offensive, even if the farmer had been touchy, which he was not at all, "are so luxuriant, that I have plucked one to stick in your button-hole; and I must

have the pleasure, at the same time, to dub you a knight of that ancient and distinguished order."

Frank then, amidst great laughter, in which Farmer M'Swyne heartily joined, invested him with the appropriate reward of his agricultural success, and Roger was known for many a year afterwards, all round the country, as the Knight of the Thistle.

They had their choice of egresses from the model farm, for though there were twenty superfluous fences, there was not one through which elephants, or even mammoths, might not have ranged with the utmost comfort and facility. Roger's cows were grazing at large on the road-side, where there was better vegetation than in their proper pastures, which were usurped by his neighbour's cattle, as indifferent to *meum* and *tuum* as their owners. There was a pound in the parish, but as straying seemed to be the established usage, it is to be presumed that only perverse beasts, which stayed at home, were ever committed to it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A LOVE CHASE.

“ If such you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.”

COMUS.

WHEN Vivyan returned from that ride he went in quest of the ladies, or at least of Mrs. Woodward, for it was only for her that he inquired.

He was pretty well acquainted by this time with all the little out-door haunts and resorts of the women of the family, and he went rapidly from one to another, his heart fluttering for no reason but that he had not heard a female voice, or seen a female form, since breakfast. A room, close to the laundry, had been fitted up in a rude temporary way for the rector's daughter to hold her little school in, for the children of the labourers

on the glebe and the cottiers in the immediate neighbourhood. Frank raised the latch. The place was silent and sunny. A robin, which had got in through the open casement, was hopping over the books and slates, picking up crumbs of bread more probably than crumbs of knowledge. The bird hopped out when Vivyan entered. The school had been over for some time; he looked into some of the books that were nearest his hand. Elizabeth's handwriting was in most of them; her name with a few kind words conferring the little rewards of infant merits, or incitements to it. There was her chair, too, and a little scarf of her's on the back of it,—trifling circumstances, but they did not escape the attention of Frank Vivyan, though the name on his tongue was still Aunt Carry.

The laundress had a little daughter, a round four-year-old, bright-eyed, rosy, merry creature, that nobody in female form, except Miss M'Cracken, ever passed without saying something, or giving something to, were it only a cowslip or a kiss. It was always

clean, too, for the mother had been a pupil of Ellen Hogg. The wonder was that the little laughing lump had not long ago been kissed away, it got so much kissing ; but it seemed to thrive upon the diet, and there it rolled and tumbled about with its short clothes, amongst the daisies, the live-long day when it was not raining, still laughing, playing with the laughing flowers, or munching laughing potatoes, which possibly helped the kisses to keep the laundress's daughter so florid and fat.

"Miss Lizabeth not dere," cried the little joyous she-urchin to Frank Vivyan; as he came out of the vacant school-room. The impertinence of the infant provoked him. Vivyan was no kisser of infant beauty, but he tapped the thing playfully on the cheek. It fell back crowing with its habitual glee ; Venus at four could not have been a more laughing child.

The bare-armed mother, unseen by Frank, stood at the door of the laundry, hot from the tub, exulting in the precocious sharpness of her rosy rogue of an infant, and probably

admiring at the same time the handsome Vivyan, a pleasing respite from the labour of washing on a summer day. Her eyes met Frank's as he was passing on, and the sly twinkle in them almost brought the colour to his cheek, for it made him feel that everybody divined the soft current of his thoughts, from three years old to thirty.

He hastened on, not without a gracious notice of the glowing laundress; and between two lofty hedges, or rather walls, of laurel and yew interwoven, he next encountered the demure nursery-governess, wrapped in a little scarlet mantle, pacing the natural cloister alone. Vivyan still thought her handsome, but he now distinctly perceived the sinister expression which had struck Markham the first time he saw her. Lucy, indeed, looked more like a conspirator, with a white powder in her pocket, or a dagger under her cloak, than a nun telling her beads. She had for some time admired Vivyan more than she had confessed to any body, and had frequently thrown herself in his

way, and tried to inveigle him into little flirtations. The present meeting, however, was purely accidental, but Miss M'Cracken thought she might as well turn it to advantage ; so she began by falling in love with a sprig of the broad-leaved myrtle in full flower, which Frank chanced to wear in his button-hole. He presented it to her, and she instantly stuck it tenderly in her bosom.

“Myrtle is my favourite tree,” said Lucy, sentimentally.

Frank was compelled to remark the curious coincidence of Lucy's taste in trees with that of the Paphian queen. Lucy simpered, and wished Mr. Vivyan would tell her why Venus had made the myrtle her own. He scarcely heard the question, so impatient was he to escape from the querist, pretty as she was. She then inquired if he was a botanist. A monosyllable answered that interrogatory.

“Would you like to learn ?” she pursued gliding by his side.

“Why, to be instructed by you,” said

Vivyan; of course—what else could he have said ?

“ I should be very happy to teach you, sir,” she rejoined, with the grave air of a person solely intent upon the duty of communicating knowledge. Frank knew not how to extricate himself, for she plucked one of the flowers of the myrtle and actually began her lecture.

“ These are called petals, one, two, three, four ; this in the middle has a very hard name, the pistil, and all those little things round it with the dust on them, are called anthers; the dust itself is named the farina,—oh, Mr. Vivyan,” she then exclaimed, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm, “ there is absolutely no end to the wonders and beauties of nature ; are you fond of natural theology ?”

So abrupt a digression surprised Frank much more than even the voluble anatomy of the flower had done ; scarcely knowing what reply to make, he said he hoped Miss M'Cracken would give him credit for not being uninterested in the sacred subject she

had alluded to. She then asked him his opinion of Paley, Butler, and a host of moralists and divines.

What a heavenly-minded young woman, thought Frank, to meet between two laurel hedges ! But, whether he gave her implicit credit for sincerity or not, he decidedly thought her conversation a bore, and, with all his politeness, he was unable much longer to conceal the fact, that the pains of his fair lecturer were utterly thrown away upon him. Directly Lucy perceived this, her looks and manner underwent a sudden and marked change ; she bit her lip, with ill-concealed resentment, dropped a ceremonious curtsey, and bade her inattentive scholar good evening ; adding, as she turned on her heel—

“ You will find Miss Elizabeth, sir, in the flower-garden.”

This annoyed Vivyan, and indeed he was vexed too, at having unintentionally wounded the girl's *amour propre*, by having been so absent in her presence,—a crime that women, more angelic than Lucy M'Cracken, are

slow to pardon. Besides, what crime is more heinous in the eyes of a governess, than neglect or scorn of her lessons; so that Frank had offended in every way.

He was half inclined to follow her, and make the *amende* for his abstraction, and seeming incivility, when he saw a young man emerge from a side-alley and join her. He distinguished his features but imperfectly; they were strange to him, and as disagreeable as strange. There was something, too, in the furtive way in which he glanced about him, which struck Vivyan as singular, but it was not his humour, or his business, to be suspicious, so he went his way in the direction of the garden, and soon thought no more either of Miss M'Cracken or her companion.

Against the garden wall, close to the door, grew an ancient fig-tree. Barren enough it was in point of figs, for the climate was not like that of the plains of Lombardy, but its foliage was luxuriant, so that Mr. Spenser would not hear of its being cut down; but, on the contrary, had a bench placed under it for his old gardener, Pierce Byrne, to sit and

smoke on, when it was either too hot, or too cold, too early, or too late to work ; or when there was nothing to be done that could not be done by proxy, which was the commonest case of all.

The gardener was now sunning himself there with his pipe ; his right leg was crossed on his left knee ; his blue Connemara hose ungartered ; his red waiscoat open, as much for want of buttons as because of the heat ; and a pair of shears at his side, with a comfortable coat of rust on them, showing how charitable they were to the excesses of vegetation. He was an aged man, who had mismanaged the horticultural department under three rectors ; but he was hale and hearty, having been always temperate and a singularly early riser, probably to have more time for dawdling and doing nothing. If his plants grew, well and good ; he was too easy to force them. Perched now on the same bench, smoking likewise, and coughing and groaning at intervals, was another old man, very diminutive, with the oddest features Vivyan had ever seen, his nose project-

ing from his shrivelled face like the bill of a fowl ; no chin, or the same as none, and a patch on his forehead, just under his little gray wig, as if he belonged to the nation of the pigmies, and had recently had a brush with the cranes. The reader will instantly recognise Mr. Maguire, the proctor. Vivyan ought to have known him, too, as Randy was in his employment, but Randy had gone up to Dublin before Vivyan's arrival, and had only that morning returned to the country. The reason of his journey to the capital will be collected from the dialogue with the gardener which Frank overheard, and which, indeed, made him acquainted with the fact that the queer disconsolate little old fellow smoking and croaking under the fig-tree was the acting agent of his Irish estate. The hedge was still between Vivyan and the old man, so that he heard the following conversation unseen by them.

“ Ugh, then, it's a hard, hard, world, Pierce, so it is, and there are hard people in it ; but they won't be hard on myself much longer,

ugh, ugh, ugh," coughed the withered little proctor.

"Och, then, it *is* a hard world," echoed the gardener, who had no right at all to say so, for not a man living in his sphere of life had found it such an easy one.

"It will be all aqual to Randy before Christmas comes round, ugh, ugh ;—well, I never wronged any one living, Pierce, of the value of that ould withered leaf on the ground there, and to be put out of my bread in my ould age,—ugh, ugh, ugh," coughing (much increased by the smoking) prevented Maguire from finishing the sentence, and his companion finished it for him.

"And for no crime, Randy, but the robbery," said the gardener.

Vivyan's first impression was, that the two old men thought very lightly of the crime of robbery, which seemed good ground enough for turning a person out of his employment; but Maguire soon relieved his mind upon that point by his next observation.

"Sure I didn't rob myself," said Randy,

"but it's the innocent that suffer in this world, and the wicked that prospers,—it's a quare world, Pierce, and I don't care how soon I lave it for a better."

"I'll take my davy," said the gardener, in a similar strain of piety, "the villains that got the money arn't much the better for it. Though I'm nothing but a poor hard-working man, up early and late, and out at all saisons, I wouldn't change with the richest rogue in Ireland, and take his conscience along with his plundher."

"And there's no country where there's such rich rogues as in ould Ireland," said Randy.

"What else is them blood-sucking absentees?" asked the gardener.

"It's no lie to say that," said Randy. "When I tould the agent up in Dublin that I'd petition the head-landlord (a chap of the name of Vivyan, rowling in luxury over in England), and see if there was no justice or mercy for a poor man, who had done no harm to nobody, he up and he tould me, that I might petition the pope, or the d—l, if

I plazed, for all the good petitioning would do me."

"And so you might, Randy;—my sister's son held a bit of land onst up at Carrickmacross, under that same Mr. Vivyan, and I know all about him. I'm tould, and I believe, there's not such a desolate young man anywhere; doesn't know where his wealth comes from, only thinks of squanderin it on horses and curricles, drinking, gaming, smoking, and divarting himself."

"Drinking, gaming, and smoking,—ugh, ugh, ugh," repeated Randy after him. You may fancy how astonished and amused Frank was to hear this account of his riches followed by such a catalogue of his vices. It was time to join the conversation, and an opportune opening in the tall hedge enabled him to do so instantly.

"That's an indifferent character to have," he said, as if he had only caught the gardener's last words.

"It's a too true picthur," said Randy, "as your honour would own, if you only knew the gintleman who's the subject of discoorse."

“His acquaintance would appear to be a very undesirable one,” said Frank, “but I think,” he added, glancing at the pipes which the old cocks had in their hands, “you might both have some little mercy on the gentleman, whoever he is, for the crime of smoking.”

“Och, thin, we ought to be merciful, as we hope for mercy,” said the gardener, rising to open the door for Frank, and growing very charitable all of a sudden.

“It’s a vanial sin, partiality to baccy,” said the proctor, “in either a rich man, or a poor man.”

Vivyan entered the garden, explored it rapidly, found nobody there, and returned to the same door in about five minutes. The two hoary sinners were now playing cards. Oh, if Mr. Woodward had caught them!—but they knew very well that the curate was many miles away. Randy had produced his pack, and he and Pierce Byrne were deep in the old popular game of five-and-forty, for halfpenny stakes, with the bees humming about them under the fig-tree.

“What !” cried Frank, who now despaired of meeting the ladies before dinner,—“gambling, too, as well as smoking!—come, old fellows, one little vice more, and you will have all the qualities of the gentleman you were abusing just now so heartily; to smoking and gaming you must add a little drinking for my sake—only be more temperate in your liquor than you have been in your language.”

He put a sovereign down on the ace of clubs, and went towards the house, resolved that poor Randy Maguire should not be deprived of his employment because he had the misfortune of having been robbed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HUE AND CRY AFTER HERCULES.

"*Dogberry.* You shall comprehend all vagrom men. You are to bid any man stand in the Prince's name.

"*Watchman.* How, if he will not stand?

"*Dogb.* Why then, take no note of him, but let him go."

THE curate had a whimsical adventure to amuse the party with when they were assembled at dinner. He had taken a discursive ramble over the hills, preparing his sermon in his usual odd way that alarmed the mountain cattle so exceedingly. At length (little thinking that any thing in human form was observing his proceedings), he found himself in a lonely glen, rarely visited by tourists, but of a strikingly beautiful and bold character. Only a footpath, known to shepherds or goatherds, traversed this

wild gorge, whose steep sides, here and there terminating in sharp white cliffs, which at twilight looked like sheeted apparitions, showed no sign of a human habitation, or even of animal life itself, except a few small mountain sheep, and the "feeble folk that make their houses in the rocks." Roaming this deserted valley, he came to a small lake, and observed at one side, at a considerable elevation, the gleaming and flashing of a stream through some patches of birch and hazel, the noblest trees that grew there. It was evidently a cascade, and he had the curiosity to clamber up through the copse to reconnoitre it. A path wound along the side of the fall, which, as you approached it, was very beautiful in its small way, tumbling over a ragged precipice of some thirty feet into a rocky basin, where it bubbled and sparkled a moment in any stray gleam of sunshine that pierced the shade, and thence pursued its course more modestly until it identified its waters with the lake.

Hercules was a little fagged when he reached the rocky basin, and was glad to seat

himself upon a stone while he contemplated the cataract. He had not been many moments thus reposing, when he was suddenly pounced on by two armed constables, and apprehended on a charge of no less a crime than highway robbery. Greatly astonished, and still more amused at such an incident, he made somewhat curt and rough replies to his captors, eyeing them very fiercely, and both by his voice and his looks strongly confirming them in the opinion that they had captured an atrocious criminal.

At length he desired to know where they intended to take him.

“Before the nearest magistrate, and that’s the Rev. Mr. Spenser,” said one of the officers.

“That’s convenient,” said Hercules, “for I’m going there myself to dinner.”

Not wishing to be troubled with such companions, he then informed them who he was, and verified his account of himself by letters which he had in his pocket.

The constables looked extremely foolish, particularly when they admitted that they

had been dogging him all the morning, and Woodward was curious, of course, to know how they came to make such an absurd mistake. Upon this, one of them, who seemed the most annoyed, and most anxious to vindicate his conduct, produced a paper from his pocket, and exhibited to Hercules the identical pen-and-ink sketch he had drawn himself of the fellow with whom he had the rencontre at the Black Castle.

Hearty was the laugh with which the curate's adventure was received by the company ; only Carry affected to be very angry with the police for taking her husband for a bandit under any circumstances.

"Was it a very striking likeness, Hercules?" inquired the rector.

"Well, Val," said the curate, "I believe it was sufficiently like to excuse the Peelers."

In fact the sketch *did* resemble Hercules, as much as if it had been done for him, and his wife hoped it would be a lesson to him not to stroll the country in future in the same outlandish attire.

“What would you have done, my dear,” she added, “if the men had been going in an opposite direction, and insisted upon taking you with them?”

“Why, in that case,” said the powerful curate, “I should perhaps have taken *them* with *me*.”

“I have no doubt you could have done it,” said George Markham.

While they were thus conversing over their wine and fruit, three men were coming towards them up the principal avenue.

“Hey-day, what have we here?” cried the rector, directing the attention of the company to the new comers, who were advancing with a rapid but measured tread. “The police again, I protest ;—Hercules, I fear there is some fresh charge against you.”

It was, indeed, a party of three constables, and the curate soon recognised in two of them the identical fellows by whom he had been dogged in the morning. They halted within a few yards of the table, and one of

them, who seemed to command, and who was personally known both to Mr. Spenser and the curate, advanced respectfully, touching his hat with a movement of his arm, as rigid as if it had been made of metal, and turned on a pivot.

“Good evening to you, Mr. Crumpe,” said the rector.

“Good evening to you humbly, sir,” answered the officer, with a second salute, the stiffest and most formal possible.

“Your business, I presume,” continued the rector, with well-feigned gravity, “is with that gentleman there, my unfortunate brother-in-law.”

Mr. Crumpe now turned to the curate, made another of his cast-iron obeisances, and commenced an awkward and prolix apology for the mistake his men had made in the morning, excusing them on the ground of their being young men in the force, and only lately under his orders.

“Oh, then,” said Mr. Spenser, “your business is not with Mr. Woodward *this* time.”

"No, sir," said Mr. Crumpe, "my business is with you."

"The tables are turned, Val," cried the curate, with the loud laugh he had brought from college with him, and which Carry had never succeeded in moderating.

The rector affected to be uneasy for his personal safety, and rose to talk with the officer apart, leaving the rest of the party in a high state of enjoyment.

He returned in less than ten minutes, his face considerably lengthened, and evidently not too well pleased by the result of the private conference with the chief constable.

"Well, Valentine," said Carry, "the police have not come to apprehend you, at all events."

"Apprehend me!" replied her brother,—
"they have come to do worse a great deal, they have come to *protect* me. I am to be garrisoned again, it appears, in spite of myself. Some obliging friend has been exerting his influence on my behalf with the Government, and Mr. Crumpe and his men have received orders to quarter themselves on my

premises, and consider themselves at my disposal."

"How absurd," said Carry.

"The best way of disposing your troops," said Hercules, "is to send them trooping."

The serious looks of the rector and his relatives showed Markham and Vivyan that there were grave domestic considerations involved in what seemed, at first sight, a mere ludicrous incident. They rose accordingly from the table, and joined the girls in one of the many charming little promenades with which the glebe and its neighbourhood abounded.

"Who is your obliging friend at court, Val?" asked the curate, as soon as the party was reduced to a council of three.

"Mr. Crumpe tells me," said the rector, "that he supposes some members of parliament of my acquaintance have been using their influence at the Castle, but I know no member likely to be so officious; I am positive that I never directly, or indirectly, sanctioned such interference on the part of anybody."

"This is Mr. Dawson's doing, I have no doubt," said Mrs. Woodward, with vivacity and decision.

"I can't think it, Carry," said the curate.

"Nor I," said the rector ; "besides, Dawson is scarcely an M.P. of ten days standing."

"Mind what I say, Valentine," said Carry ; "your friend at court is Mr. Dawson, and nobody else. Who else would take such an impertinent liberty? Is there another man living who would have the assurance to make an application to the government in your name, without your request, or your permission?"

"It's a most extraordinary occurrence," said the rector ; "but I must now go up and sit awhile with Margaret, and leave you and Hercules to your conjugal stroll."

"But you will send the police packing, at all events," said the curate, as his brother-in-law left the room.

Mr. Spenser made no reply : perhaps he did not hear what the curate said.

"He will do no such thing," said Carry,

with severity, biting her lips, and swelling with vexation at her brother's weakness. She then rose from her chair and paced up and down the portico, like a corpulent queen in high displeasure with a minister ; she abused her brother in feminine but sharp language, and she did not let her husband escape either, but told him he was a great deal too simple even for a clergyman ; that he had too much of the dove, and too little of the serpent, and more in the same strain of ladylike invective ; all because Hercules had not divined what she had divined at the first glance, that not only was Dawson at the bottom of this police affair, but that his interference was a scheme of that gentleman to ingratiate himself with Mrs. Spenser.

“ There are wheels within wheels, my dear,” she said, at length reaching the peroration, and speaking with great earnestness, but you and my brother are as blind as those bats that are flying past the windows.”

“ But you women,” said her husband, a little subdued by her energy, giant as he was, “ are like watchmakers—you have a microscopic eye for wheels.”

“And you men,” rejoined Carry, “or some of you, at least, have no eyes for wheels, until they are as big as mill-wheels.”

So ended that week at the parsonage. There was one member of the household to whom the return of the police was no mystery, nor the influence to which that event was owing. The acquaintance which Mr. Dawson made with Miss M’Cracken upon the island had not been left unimproved. It was from her he had learned the fact that the police force had been withdrawn from the parsonage, and to her he privately communicated, not only the steps which he designed to take in order to secure its restoration, but the object which he had in view, namely, to gain the good-will of Mrs. Spenser. Lucy engaged in this privy correspondence, with little motive, in the first instance, but the pure love of clandestine doings. Her views of mischief, however, widened as she advanced ; and she soon began to feel an especial gratification in secretly supporting a man whose addresses she

knew were intolerable to Elizabeth Spenser, towards whom she bore an intense dislike, and of whom she had of late been growing absurdly jealous. How Vivyan's indifference to her (of which she had so decided a proof in the laurel walk) tended to exasperate this state of feeling may easily be imagined. The young man who secretly joined Miss M'Cracken upon that occasion was an envoy of Dawson's, and the junior of the two suspicious personages whom Sydney had met with at Dawson's house. He was the bearer of a letter to her, containing a present of a pair of bracelets, and was under the impression that Lucy was Dawson's cousin, not that he would have objected to undertake the same mission had its legitimacy been ever so open to question. His instructions from his employer were to take Miss M'Cracken's orders, and execute promptly any little commission she might entrust him with; but Lucy did not task him heavily—she merely sent him of an errand to Redcross for a surreptitious supply of laudanum for her black bottle.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CURATE'S SERMON.

“ His preaching much, but more his practice wrought,
A living sermon of the truths he taught.”

THE GOOD PARSON.

THE exordium of the curate's discourse alarmed Mr. Spenser exceedingly, for it proclaimed roaring war with a power which the preacher reprobated as the grand enemy of mankind, and of Irish mankind especially, the foe to all improvement and civilisation, a spirit in open rebellion to the divine word, and against which he wished he had ten thousand tongues to testify, and as many thousand hands to lift.

The rector trembled for the Pope,—he folded his arms resignedly in his surplice, and awaited the assault on the Vatican, which seemed inevitable. Before the end of

the exordium Hercules had actually made himself invisible in the dust which, with his tremendous action, he knocked out of the old red cushions; and the deep thundering voice issued as it were out of a cloud. Markham and Vivyan, accustomed to the repose of the English pulpit, were amazed at such a display of muscular energy and vocal power in a quiet little country church. But it was not against Rome the curate took up his parable on the present occasion ; it was neither against the Pope, or Anti-Christ, that he bolted his invectives, but against the sloth and indolence of his countrymen. It was a capital trenchant discourse, full of broad sense and sound morality, but as termagant as any harangue could be. He felt that he was entitled to inveigh against sloth, being himself the most laborious and energetic of mortal men ; and inveigh against the vice he did, as if he had it before him incarnate ; he bespattered it with the foulest language, branded it with every crime, imputed every human misery to it, stuck it up in a pillory, and scolded and pelted it for half an hour,

with such a copiousness and variety of epithets and reproaches, as would have better become the red or the blue petticoat than the black gown. But the abuse was mixed with so much undeniable truth, and came so naturally from the curate's lips, and so palpably from his heart, that it seemed at length perfectly germane to the subject. He made his audience feel that sloth deserved all he said of it, and sent some of the Hogg family home with uncomfortable forebodings as to their fate both here and hereafter.

He went back to the beginning of things, and pointed out the deep moral in the simple tale of the Creation; how there were six working days to one sabbath; then he demanded whether earth was to dictate to heaven, or heaven to earth; what right had man to seven days of rest, when God, by precept and example, had declared there should be one only, and that at the close of a week of toil? As for you, he cried, ye Hoggs and M'Swynes, a perpetual sabbath is what you would fain keep, if Providence

would only send ravens to feed you, and shower manna down upon you; but I say unto you that the sluggard's sabbaths are Satan's sabbaths, and that it is wrath heaven will rain on you and not manna; his ministers of vengeance, not of mercy, Providence will send to visit you, if you do not repent and mend your lives; and the only repentance that will be worth a button to you is to cease to be the drowsy knaves you are, and work for your bread like honest men. There never was an honest man who was not a laborious one, and there never was a sluggard but he was a rogue into the bargain. Now I'll let you into one of the secrets of the next world, and you may publish it from the tops of your neat cabins and at the corners of your dainty streets;—if there is one thing under the sun that heaven detests and abhors more than another, it is the very thing you love most—the abominable and rascally vice of idleness. It is the will of heaven that man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his own brow, and you want to eat

yours in that of your neighbour's. See what a country Providence has given to a crew of lazy lubberly varlets, who would be only too well off in Zahara or Stony Arabia ! Dare you say that God is not goodness and bounty itself to you ? Aye, that he is, a thousand times too bountiful : I could almost quarrel with Heaven for not having given this charming and fertile island to the honest, hard-working, independent Dutch, and settled you in the swamps of Holland, to pump for your lives. No thanks to you if your fields are as green as they are ; though they are not half so green as they ought to be, and would be, if Providence had given them to industrious people. Beware, I say unto you, ye Hoggs and M'Swynes ; Heaven withdraws the blessings that man abuses ; " a fertile land," it is written, " maketh he barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." And do we not see the scripture already fulfilled in the meagre produce of your neglected or exhausted fields ? No sirocco withers your lands ; no army of locusts desolates your

crops ; the only blight is human sloth ; the only locusts are your own selves.

Then he discharged a volley of texts at them, principally from that magazine of practical every-day wisdom, the Book of the Proverbs. "As the door turneth on its hinges, so doth the slothful on his bed."—"The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth."—"He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread, but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding."—"The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets." Here the curate paused, and sternly demanded of his congregation, which of them did not see a lion every day of his life? "Why," he exclaimed, "Afric is not so infested with lions as Ireland is."

The junior part of the audience looked a little startled at this asseveration, and Billy Pitt felt abashed at his father's ignorance of the natural history of his country. But the curate vehemently protested that he affirmed the truth, and that he would proclaim from

the house-tops that all the miseries of Ireland were owing to the lions. Why were the bogs unreclaimed?—For fear of the lions. Why were the fields untilled?—Fear of the lions. Why were the very streets of Red-cross unpaved and unbesomed?—Because there was a lion in every one of them. Then he told them that the lion seen by the slothful is a phantom sent to scare them from their duties by him who is represented as a lion himself, and a roaring lion, seeking to devour, and who would eat up the sluggards first of all.

Having thus sufficiently terrified his audience, he proceeded to inform them how the lions were to be combated. “Face them,” he cried, “and they will scamper away like hares. I have made lions run in my time, so I speak from experience, my friends. Resist the devil, and the best way to resist him is to work. Christianity is the religion of work. Its divine Author was himself a workman; its apostles were fishermen and mechanics, expressly to teach us that there is nothing so good, nothing so holy, nothing so

godlike as industry, as there is nothing so shabby and diabolical as sloth. The God of Christianity is a God of industry ; he took his kings from the sheep-fold, and his prophets from the plough." This idea led the enthusiastic preacher into a rhapsody which delighted Markham. The curate broke forth into a glowing panegyric upon rural life, with its pastoral and agricultural occupations ; their calm pleasures, their salubrious nature, their transcendent usefulness, their true dignity ; how the plough exceeded the sword in glory,—how no foughten field, not the memorable fight of the Boyne itself (which in Mr. Woodward's estimation exceeded all the battles of history in glory), is half so illustrious as the field that industry finds a waste and leaves a garden ; how the cultivator of the earth is the victor for man to honour ; how the Pagans understood this when they adored the givers of the corn, the olive, and the vine ; and how he panted for the day when some greater conqueror than had ever yet appeared—greater than Strafford, or Cromwell, or glorious and immortal

William himself—would visit their shores, not with the sword to ravage, but with wisdom to reclaim and cultivate; not to subdue the people, but to vanquish their follies and their crimes; not to win gory honours by the slaughter of men or the sack of towns, but to bind his brows with unbloody and unfading laurels, gathered with the sickle not the sword, with all “the pomp and circumstance of glorious Peace.”

“You laid it hard on them,” said the rector to Hercules, after service, as they all walked back together to the curate’s house to lunch there. The fact was, that Mr. Spenser winced a little himself under his curate’s invectives; and so, indeed, did Vivyan too, as he confessed to his friend in the course of the evening.

“I give them a blast like that once a year,” said Mr. Woodward; “it does them no harm at all events.”

“No harm!” cried Markham. “I should think it ought to do them all the good in the world.”

"Ah, the Syren, sloth, is a sweeter singer than I am," said the curate. "That was not a bad hit about the Dutch, eh, Val?"

"It was capital," said the rector; "but it was all excellent, only perhaps a little too—what shall I say—too termagant."

"I have no patience," said Hercules, "with the lazy varlets, starving in rags, and wallowing in the mire, when, with a little common industry, they might be as well housed, clothed, and fed, as any peasantry in Christendom."

"You don't think them the finest peasantry in the world, Mr. Woodward?" said George Markham.

"The flatterers that tell them so are not their friends," replied the curate,—“it's not often the rogues hear so much plain truth as they heard from me to-day. Truth is a scarce commodity in this country, Mr. Markham."

"It ought to be abundant," said the rector, "for we are exceedingly economical of it."

“ You think there ought to be a great accumulation somewhere ?” said the curate, laughing. “ Well, I wonder where it is ?”

“ But, Mr. Woodward,” said Vivyan, who had not yet spoken, “ were you not a little too hard on the Piggledies, particularly as you let the Higgledies go scot-free ?”

“ I gave it to the Higgledies at Easter,” replied Hercules, “ and there is no part of Ireland where they deserve a rating better than in this very county. Formerly I used to have them both up together, landlords and tenants, but the result was, that each thought himself abused merely to humour the other ; and besides it was only encouraging the notion, already far too prevalent, that the faults of the rich excuse those of the poor, and *vice versâ*.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

YOUNG LOVE.

“ Beauties, have ye seen this toy,
Called Love, a little boy,
Almost naked, wanton, blind,
Cruel now, and then as kind ?
If he be amongst ye, say,
He is Venus’ runaway.”

HUE AND CRY AFTER CUPID.

THE fonder Vivyan grew of the society of Mr. Spenser and the ladies of his family, the more gently and good-naturedly did he bear with the comparative clownishness of Sydney, the more incapable he was of repelling his advances with the coldness and hauteur of his less complaisant and less facile cousin. Greatly to Markham’s chagrin, it was soon settled that young Spenser was to be sent to Cambridge at the end of autumn ; and Vivyan, in fact, undertook to introduce him

to his own college, his own tutor, and his own circle of acquaintance. There was another party as well as Markham, who disapproved as strongly as possible of the arrangement; we need hardly say it was the curate, who never for a moment swerved from his opinion that Dublin University was the best academy in the world, and his friend, Tom Beamish, the best scholar in that academy, and therefore the best scholar in the world, by a plausible, if not very sound or original process of reasoning. Carry, however, kept her husband quiet; she "hoped it was all for the best," and in truth she was secretly pleased that the point was carried against Hercules, for (independently of her English notions) she wished her nephew to be removed as far as possible from his Irish associates, and she thought it extremely fortunate that at so critical moment he should have formed a friendship with a young man of Frank Vivyan's stamp.

Simple George Markham! While he was tormenting himself about his cousin's entanglement with Sydney, he was utterly blind

to a much more serious complicity with another member of the rector's family.

Ah, it was a dangerous atmosphere for fiery and waxen youth to breathe, that which two such women as Mrs. Woodward and her niece made round about them ; an atmosphere of light and love, warmer and brighter than the very air of those summer days. When Vivyan sailed in the *Circe*—nay, when he landed on the emerald isle—he was heart-free and heart-whole ; scarcely, indeed, knew he had a heart at all, except as a scientific fact, learned from a cabinet cyclopedia. Woman had entered his eye, but her image had never penetrated beyond the retina ; he had only seen or read of beauty, and of passion knew no more than that it was something that inspires sonnets, and goes to the composition of a romance. It boots not to inquire how it happened that the revelation was now made to him—the old mystery that is revealed to every son of Adam, individually—that “ man is not made to be alone.” At what particular moment the rich golden shaft smote him, or whether

it was in the boudoir, or the library, or the gardens, or on the glassy water, or on the pine-clad height to the left of the parsonage, a favourite resort in the sweet summer evenings, was known perhaps only to himself. It is idle to pretend acquaintance with facts of this nature, as many writers of domestic history are wont to do. He was young, ardent, imaginative, soft, susceptible, and it is enough to say of Elizabeth Spenser, that it would have been almost a reproach to Vivyan had he been proof against her charms; her companion, as he was, from morning to night in some amusing occupation or busy amusement; sitting with her, or sauntering, or sailing, conversing, or reading; no "strict age or sour severity," to check the flow of youthful spirits, or the play of fancy; the serenity of Mr. Spenser, on the contrary and his admiration of Vivyan, sanctioning and promoting freedom, and Carry Woodward licensing with the broad seal of her comely presence and goodly countenance the growing familiarities, in which she did not perceive the sweet mischief that was latent.

It was not by her accomplishments that Elizabeth Spenser fascinated Frank Vivyan, for no girl of her rank had so few of what are commonly so called. She understood and loved music without being a performer; she neither drew, nor painted; in fact, her accomplishments were of a higher kind; her mind was accomplished by the habit of elegant and solid reading; her character with tenderness, modesty, truth, and courage. There was every thing feminine about her, and nothing frivolous. She was the only woman Vivyan had ever met who was not perpetually inquiring for new books. Her father had taught her to see in old books a variety, a freshness, a fullness, and vigour to be sought in vain in the annual teemings of the literature of the day. But Elizabeth did not use to talk of her reading. You might find out that she was familiar with Shakspeare, with Milton and Pope, with Massillon, or Jeremy Taylor, for she was as far from the affectation of concealment as from that of display. It was by the tone of her conversation, and the good taste and sound judg-

ment of her remarks, that you discovered the superiority of her intellectual training. Then she had a keen appreciation of wit in conversation; the pleasures she loved were the calm, pure, healthy enjoyment of books, flowers, friendships, and beneficent occupations. Vivyan saw her not merely by her own light, but by the light reflected from the faces of those that loved her, and from the numerous objects of her care. Her spirit of usefulness was visible through a wide circle round her father's house; she supplied, in a great measure, his deficiency in point of vigour; there was no want of benevolence in Mr. Spenser's nature, and his daughter supplied the place of that active usefulness without which benevolence resembles the tree that gives no shade, or the flower that yields no fruit.

A relative of Vivyan's had once shown him a character of his mother, written by Mr. Everard long after his retirement to the continent. It had many features in common with that of Elizabeth Spenser, and (as he afterwards owned) it was the perception of

this resemblance that first led him to indulge in the dangerous pursuit of studying the mind of a captivating woman, with her person at the same time before his eyes, inevitably blending the admiration of form and feature with the moral or metaphysical pleasure of contemplating inward beauty.

It was a strange but a natural thought that occurred to him one evening, as he sat alone in a little bocage close to the house, the creation of Elizabeth's hands, and one of her favourite resorts, either to crop her carnations, or provide for a little colony of robins and blackbirds, which had settled there under her protection. It was a singular thought, but a natural one—"My mother, at her marriage, was probably just such a girl." How long did he sit dreaming there in that bocage? No matter.

The clock struck seven; he started up to perform the duties of the toilette, and on his hurried way to his chamber, he met Elizabeth descending to the drawing-room. She seemed to his view a miracle of loveliness; lovely she was indeed, but what beauty is it

that imagination does not heighten ; imagination, that paints the lily and perfumes the violet ? Its magic beams falling full at that moment on Elizabeth made her a blaze of beauty ; it deprived him of the power of expression, and he never saw her afterwards but in that enchanted light of love.

For it is not by the light of the sun that young love sees its idols, but by the faery light of its own dreams. Love's vision is not subject to the laws of optics ; it has optics of its own, to which every line is a line of beauty, and in which every ray is *couleur de rose*.

But of all passions love is the most unsociable. Your lover is the worst company in the world. Vivyan was unconvinced that day as a spectre at a banquet. Mr. Spenser's wine and Mr. Spenser's wit sparkled in vain for him. Even Mrs. Woodward's cordial affability, which seldom failed to warm and animate all within the sphere of her fascinations, was entirely thrown away. His abstraction, however, was ascribed to a cause different from the true one, for it was known

that he had received a letter acquainting him with the serious illness of his friend and benefactor in Spain, and that seemed sufficient reason for the depression of spirits under which he manifestly laboured.

Indeed, nobody but Carry herself seemed up to the conversational mark at dinner. The curate and Markham were manifestly done up after what they called a *saunter* of fifteen or twenty miles, and had little more force left than they wanted for the exercise of the knife and fork. As to Sydney, he had not been seen since breakfast.

With coffee, however, a light breeze of conversation sprang up; but it threatened to fall again in a few minutes, so that Mrs. Woodward, alarmed at the prospect of being becalmed for the rest of the evening, dropped a hint to the effect that if Mr. Spenser would amuse them either with his "Directions to Governesses," or his "Advice to Curates," the company would take it as a great favour.

"Do, Val, and keep Mr. Markham and me awake," said the curate, rousing himself, and

conquering a disposition to yawn with a muscular effort not much more polite.

"I shall more probably put you asleep," said the rector.

"No, no, no," said Markham, not very distinctly knowing what he was negating, but conscious that he ought to negative something.

"Which will you have, Carry?" asked the rector, rising.

"The Governesses, Val," answered Hercules for her, "for I'm not equal to controversy to-night, and the other paper would provoke one, as sure as a gun."

"Be it so," said the rector, and, producing a small manuscript, handed it to Carry, who, with a good discretion, read it to the circle.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ADVICE TO GOVERNESSES.

“But pardon me ; I am too sudden bold :
To teach a teacher ill_beseemeth me.”

LOVE’S LABOUR LOST.

“WHILE the most celebrated wits have not thought it beneath them to advise all other classes of domestics, it has been your misfortune, ladies, and not the least of the wrongs of which you are entitled to complain, that no pains have been taken by any competent authority, to instruct *you* in the principles of your profession and duty. Without going the length of affirming that your vocation is equal in importance and respectability to that of the cook, or the butler, I may assert, without flattering you too much, that it is not inferior to that of

either the house-maid or the kitchen-maid, from which it follows that you have at least an equal right to a place in any complete system of *directions to servants*.

“Regarding you in the light in which you are considered by the greater part of the world, I do not know how I can better commence the advice, which in the most friendly spirit I desire to offer, than by earnestly warning you against the fatal error of thinking more highly of yourselves than you are thought of by your masters and mistresses. Connected with this is another mistake, no less serious, into which I have observed many of you prone to fall,—that of taking a deeper and livelier interest in your pupils than is felt by their parents themselves, whose value for their children may fairly be measured by the respect and consideration they pay those into whose hands they confide them at the tenderest and most critical season of life. Divest yourselves, at once and for ever, of all romance and sentiment upon the subject of education. Your sole business is, like other menials, to make the

best of your place; and as the wages are commonly trifling (if, indeed, salary is 'an object' to you at all), you must only endeavour to eke them out as well as you can, with every little incidental emolument and advantage which your situation throws in your way. Always recollect that nobody can have a *right* to greater services than they choose to *pay for*, and that you are only bound in conscience to give your scholars an equivalent for the pittance you receive; and not even that little, if you are expected to combine the office of instruction with the collateral duties of the laundress or the mantua-maker. You stand (as learned writers agree) *in loco parentis*; you represent the mistress of the family you enter, and you have, consequently, as clear a right to neglect or mismanage your subjects as if you stood literally in the maternal relation towards them. Ponder this principle well, and it will save you from a great deal of anxiety and vexation. What can be more preposterous than to see a lady exhausting her patience, overworking her brain, and sometimes even

wearying her hand, for the benefit of a set of turbulent young people who are not related to her ever so remotely, while the woman who bore them sees them perhaps only once a day, scarcely ever thinks of them at all, and probably never corrected one of them in her life?

“Begin by keeping your pupils at an awful distance. The further you keep them from you, the less you expose your temper to be ruffled by their disobedience or their inattention, and a serene temper is, in your situation, a quality of the first importance. Besides, the communication of knowledge implies the previous acquisition of it, and how can a young lady improve her own mind as she ought to do, if she squanders the greater part of the day in the nursery or the school-room, in the worst possible company, that of ignorant, ill-behaved children. You will at least be always justified in bestowing as much time upon the cultivation of your own mind as the mother of your pupils devotes to fashionable frivolities and amusements.

“If you are forbidden to correct your pupils

upon any occasion, or for any transgression whatsoever, strictly comply with the injunction. A mother is free to ruin her children, if she pleases, and it is extremely presumptuous in a hired governess to try to hinder her. It is another question, when you find it impossible to retain your situation in consequence of the turbulence of your subjects, which you are not permitted to repress. You will in such a case consult your own generous impulses only, and not resign your place and your salary without leaving a character for energy behind you, which may probably be of use to the lady who succeeds to your enviable post.

“Be very particular in the choice of books for your pupils. The best rule is to select them exactly as if you were selecting them for your own use. You will, of course, take care that they relate to those branches of knowledge with which you are *least* familiar, should you happen not to be one of those omniscient young women who teach *all* things teachable, and ‘make themselves useful’ into the bargain. Suppose the mother to

remark that the works you have ordered from the family bookseller are too abstract or advanced for the school-room, nothing is easier than to tell her that she greatly under-rates the abilities of her children; and, as this is always an agreeable remark to the maternal ear, you may order another batch of similar publications very soon after, upon the strength of it.

“It is very convenient for you, when the mother has a reasonable share of ignorance for a woman, and knows little or nothing of modern languages. You may then purchase the novels of George Sand, and pass them off as the works of a French Mrs. Ellis or Mrs. Trimmer. Besides, should you happen to be a daughter of a Welch parson, nothing would be easier than to make the language of the ancient Britons answer for German, and increase your reputation, if not your income, by the device.”

[Just at this point, Carry suddenly dropped the paper she was reading on her lap, and glanced over her shoulder at the door, near which she happened to sit, as if she heard

some noise in that direction, or expected somebody to enter. It was but a momentary interruption. She resumed as follows.]

“Another excellent and approved mode of improving yourself is by securing the assistance of eminent masters. Many a young governess has entered a family illiterate and unaccomplished, and left it a well-informed and highly polished woman. You cannot afford yourself to incur the expence of the best professors of music and dancing, or Italian and German, but your employers *can* ; impress the advantage of masters upon them strongly, and if you have any relatives or friends of your own in the line, you will have an opportunity of serving them at the same time that you serve yourself. Should you be in love with any handsome young pianist, or drawing-master, a charming arrangement will easily occur to you, by which you can at one and the same time improve your scholars, and secure happiness as well as improvement for yourself. If you are extremely frank and confiding, you will let your flirtation with the gay artist be known

to the family ; if you take my advice, you will keep it as quiet as you can.

“Do not encourage the mother to be always popping into your school-room. and prying into your proceedings. Some ladies have the meanness to be always watching their governesses, and controlling their hours and their movements. Keep your mistress at as great a distance as her children. If she has confidence in you, she should mind her own business, and leave you to manage yours ; if she has not, she ought to declare it frankly, and then you would know how to act. Establish yourself either at the top of the house, or in some remote wing of it, so as to make it, at all events, a long journey for madam, or my lady, to visit your apartment, either to call you to account for chastising her favourite son, or perhaps to pry after your Angelo, or your Tamburini.”

Here Mrs. Woodward again glanced over her shoulder, but without discontinuing her reading.

“Some mothers think their children can never get governessing and schooling enough.

They desire to make prodigies of them, and for that object would sacrifice not only the health of the poor things themselves, but what is of much more consequence (at least to you), the health of their preceptress. Combat this system resolutely. Be prepared with the fable of the bow kept always bent, and ready with cases of fine boys, who, to your knowledge, became absolute idiots in consequence of too close attention to their books. You ruined a charming little fellow yourself (did you not) by over-teaching him, and what would you not give now that you had acted upon the opposite system. How you reproach yourself with all the severities you employed to please a mother and to produce a dunce ! Not for worlds would you commit again the same fatal folly."

Now Mrs. Woodward not only dropped the manuscript again, but bounced up, and sharply opening the door, received Miss M'Cracken in her arms. In fact, that young lady would probably have tumbled into the room, head foremost, had she not been supported by Carry's voluminous person.

"Miss M'Cracken!" exclaimed the matron,

in her most formidable manner, drawing herself up to her full height, and sternly regarding the detected eave's-dropper.

Lucy, however, encountered her looks undauntedly, and with the utmost composure simperingly addressed the rector, and said that Mrs. Spenser desired to see him. He obeyed, of course, and the governess withdrew along with him.

"You don't think she was listening at the door, aunt?" said one of the girls.

"I am positive of it," said Carry, "I have a quick ear, my dear."

"You may be mistaken, after all," said the charitable curate, drily, "but go on with your reading."

"At all events," said his wife, preparing to obey, "she has given Valentine a hint to improve his essay." She then continued without further interruption to the end.

"If this sound reasoning should fail to answer its purpose, there are various methods to which you may resort, to relieve both yourself and your scholars from the irksomeness of too close application. Their

health, as well as their instruction, is in your province. See that they take abundant outdoor exercise. Accompany them when you please, but a head-ache, a cold, or a sprained ankle, will always enable you to remain quietly at your fire-side, and the children's maid is, or ought to be, a perfectly safe person to trust them to. You, at least, may always have as much confidence in her as you think proper; and should any accident ever befall a child in her custody, it will always be easy to demonstrate that the same would have happened had the mother herself been on the spot at the moment. When you cannot escape walking with your pupils, carry out their mother's wishes effectually, and give them enough of it. Should a trifling illness result from over-walking them, it is no fault of yours, and you will gain a few days' repose for your feet, and also save your shoes, which is no trifling consideration. Never be without Buchan at your elbow, have a medicine-chest of your own, and be on a good understanding with the family apothecary. Many an hour of relaxation is to be procured by proper attention to the

little illnesses of young people. It is much wiser to anticipate a disorder than to wait for it to make its appearance formally. Such of you as teach 'the rudiments of Latin' will understand the meaning of '*principiis obsta.*'

"As I have alluded to Latin, let me drop a hint upon the subject while I think of it. Do not suffer the elder brothers of your pupils to entrap you into classical discussions. You only profess the rudiments, and though, of course, you know much more, you ought not to parade it in society, but rather keep it in the back-ground, and reserve it all for your scholars in private. Apply the same rule to other things as well as Latin. Many of *our* sex preserve a reputation for learning by shunning every opportunity of displaying it; how much more becoming then is the same modesty in people of *yours*.

"With French it is otherwise. You cannot be too lavish and ostentatious of whatever French you know, be it much or little. Lard every thing you write and interlard every thing you say with it; nothing makes such an impression on people who don't under-

stand the language, and the less they comprehend what you mean, the higher opinion they will have of you. At breakfast ask for the *pang* and the *boor*. At dinner say, you will take some *dingdong*, and afterwards have some of the *buff bully*. You have no conception what an effect these little feminine displays (for French is essentially feminine), produce in Bloomsbury and about Hackney. I have known wine taken with a governess in an irresistible burst of admiration, occasioned by a quotation of two words from the '*Echo de Paris*.' It will always, however, be well to be on your guard against disagreeable surprises. Beware of the exiled Poles, and the young wine-merchants from Bourdeaux. When you hear that M. Latour, or M. St. Etienne, has been asked to dinner, you can have one of those convenient aches and indispositions, of which a governess ought always to have a large stock on hand. If you have exhausted those excuses in other ways, do any thing sooner than let the extent of your French acquisitions be discovered. You may say that *you don't understand the patois of Gascony !*

“ So universal is the notion that the British governess possesses every qualification under the sun, and so common is it to pledge them to be ‘generally useful,’ that in many houses you would be required to act as *garde-malade* to the children in the measles, nor do I well know how you are to escape the duty, except through the friendly interposition of the apothecary, who (at your suggestion) may insist upon calling in a professional nurse-tender. You would then have a few weeks at your disposal to visit your father at his curacy in Ireland, or your uncle Williams, at his vicarage in Wales. The danger of a deduction from your salary need not much alarm you, for few people understand fractions well enough to calculate what it ought to be.

“ Do not expect civility and good-nature, and you will never be disappointed at not meeting with it. Truly wise and good people will always treat you with urbanity and kindness, but to shape your conduct with reference to the wise and good would argue a degree of ignorance of human nature in-

conceivable in a woman who is bound to be ignorant of nothing. Never remain an instant in any place after you find another more advantageous and at your disposal. Be just as considerate and grateful to your employers as they are to you—no more. If you confine yourself, as many ladies do, to the education of young gentlemen, take care that they are not much above your shoulder, or over the age of twelve, unless you happen to be a Thalestris, or a lineal descendant from Boadicea. In that case I do not see why you should not prepare them for college, as well as for Eton and Harrow. If you belong to the class of finishing governesses, as you are paid much better than the rest of your profession, be as slow in finishing your young ladies as you can ; you may be certain they will be finished soon enough, if you give them the last exquisite touch just when you have amassed a hundred pounds, and are resolved to keep your attachment to Angelo no longer a secret.

“If you could command your personal appearance, I would advise you to be good-

looking rather than handsome. If you are beautiful, the mother will dislike you ; if you are plain, you will be equally unfortunate on the other side of the house. The most comfortable post for you is the family of a widower. There you may be as absolute with your subjects as you please, and it is your own fault if you do not speedily turn the maiden aunt out of doors, and raise yourself from the low condition of a governess into the haughty station of a step-mother.

“ But the natural close of a governess’s career is the opening of that of a school-mistress. You are a fish in a frying-pan, and the only transition for you is into the fire. Tyrannise now over the young as you have been tyrannised over by the old. As education, in a narrow sphere, has been made painful and degrading to yourself, so let it be to others in the wider circle where you are now supreme. Be a Czarina to boys at Brompton, or an Ogress to girls at Blackheath. The great world has been harsh to you, revenge its harshness upon the little one.

Return neglect with neglect, and cruelty with cruelty, or continue (if you are very simple, and very good) to be an amiable, conscientious, and Christian woman, filling the sacred post that mothers abdicate, earning ill-usage hardly, and receiving no wages worth mentioning but those of scorn and ingratitude."

The curate and Markham had been sound asleep for some time before Mrs. Woodward had done reading.

"Very flattering to Valentine," she said, rising to shake Hercules, and affecting to be hurt at this practical criticism on her brother's production.

As she crossed the hall a few minutes afterwards on her way to her chamber, she encountered her nephew, and would fain have inquired where he had dined and spent the day ; but he looked more than usually morose and gloomy, and scarcely vouchsafed her a civil return to the affectionate good-night she wished him.

CHAPTER XL.

A DISCOVERY.

“ I understand you very well (quoth Pantagruel): But preach it up ; prattle on it, and defend it as much as you will, even from hence to the next Whitsuntide, if you please so to do ; yet in the end will you be astonished to find how you shall have gained no ground at all upon me, nor persuaded me by your fair speeches and smooth talk, to enter ever so little into *the thralldom of debt*. And I am fully confirmed in the opinion, that the Persians erred not when they said that *the second vice was to lie, the first being that of owing money*.”

RABELAIS.

THE brow of Sydney Spenser was growing daily darker and darker, and an expression of care was visible in his features, not only foreign to his age, but to his former character. His disappearances were growing at the same time more frequent and abrupt ; he made appointments and broke them on slight pretences ; he walked or rode out with the rest of the party, and suddenly

quitted them, sometimes giving an account of his conduct, but often vouchsafing no explanation.

Mrs. Woodward, and his sister Elizabeth, had been far enough indeed from conjecturing the true cause of his depression of spirits, when first they remarked it. Now they did not observe him as closely as before; the mind of the best of sisters cannot be always occupied with solicitude for a brother, and Carry surely had enough to engage her thoughts and affections, active and warm as they were, without anxieties for a graceless nephew.

But Sydney was now, indeed, an object of compassion, and he would not have wanted pity and sympathy, had his distresses been but known; had he only possessed the courage, or the prudence to reveal them to the relatives who were so tenderly interested in his welfare.

The days of his unbounded confidence in false friends were nearly over. Though far from being convinced of the profligacy of Dawson, he had begun to be painfully sensible

of the influence which, even in his absence, he exerted over him. Those small debts, from which his false friend had obligingly promised to relieve him (having first encouraged him to contract them), remained still undischarged, or at least the greater part of them; they considerably exceeded Sydney's rough estimate, and though Dawson had made some small advances, they only sufficed to keep the creditors quiet for a few weeks. The residue still hung over him—a millstone round his neck by day, an incubus on his breast by night. Let young men beware of contracting small debts, for small debts may be great calamities. There are few sadder, and at the same time more unnatural, spectacles in the world, than a young man under twenty with the cares of the Fleet prison written on his forehead, with the anxieties of debt clouding his eye and hollowing his cheek. Had Sydney candidly disclosed his embarrassments to his father, there was nothing in them so serious that he could not have been extricated from them with facility. But Mr. Spenser had never been in his son's

confidence. He was too negligent to seek it, and Sydney, left to himself, and depending for the means of enjoyment upon the acquaintanceships of his own making, had never felt the want of his father's friendship, or even conceived the idea that such a relationship could exist between them. Then, to have had recourse to his father would have involved the necessity of numerous confessions, which false pride deterred him from making; he had contracted those small debts disingenuously, and he now concealed them, with the folly which uniformly accompanies indirectness, and aggravates its evil consequences.

Moreover, he could not but feel that the recent loss of a considerable sum of money made it a particularly unfavourable moment for adding to the rector's burdens. No, it was no longer the pursuit of coarse and boisterous pleasures elsewhere that led Sydney to absent himself from the society of the parsonage, or the festive expeditions from it. How little dreamed the virtuous and affectionate Elizabeth that the copses on the heights over the house, and the heathery

nooks on the edge of the water, where she and her brother had a thousand times played hide and seek in their childhood, were often used now for a like game in real life, the undiverting and degrading one of debtor and creditor, which, though it supplies the stage with so much farce, and though the riotous wit of a Rabelais may torture mirth out of it, will never to the end of the chapter be fun and frolic to the actual players at it. Respect for Mr. Spenser alone kept his son's creditors from coming up boldly under his library windows and asking a settlement of their little accounts. Some of them were now beginning to menace Sydney with that extreme course, but he had hitherto, by excuses, promises, even threats, and a variety of tricks and stratagems, kept them from the house, though the more impatient of the number sometimes penetrated the glebe, and drove him to skulk, not always with success, about the grounds, or in the farm-offices.

Cheerfully, without a murmur or a moment's hesitation, would Elizabeth have given all she possessed in the world, to the

very rings on her fingers, to have extricated her brother from such disgraceful difficulties. Cheerfully would Carry have sold her diamonds, if she had had diamonds to sell, for the same purpose; but the truth was utterly unknown to them, and indeed to every member of the household but Miss M'Cracken, to whom nothing was unknown that was said or done in the parsonage, or round about it, particularly by Sydney, over all whose doings she had long exercised a malignant and unsuspected surveillance.

But, as we have already seen, he had another cause of uneasiness. He had little doubt, from the description his uncle had given, and still less from the portrait he had drawn of the person he had seen at the Black Castle, that he was one of the two suspicious characters, whom he himself had not only met, but sat at table with at Dawson's ill-omened house. To be sure, Dawson had stated the man's profession, and explained what brought him to the country; but then, on the other hand, it seemed impossible not to connect him, in some way or

another, with the robbery. Fearful ideas flashed for a moment across his mind; he laughed at them, but still they returned. Was his confidence in Dawson diminished?— he *said* to himself that it was not, yet he *acted* as if it was, for he could not bring himself to disclose to his uncle his suspicions respecting Messieurs Lamb and Thomson, although it might have furnished a clue to the detection of the thieves, and could not possibly compromise Dawson, assuming the statements to be true which he had made to Sydney.

Thus, not only haunted by the faces of creditors (aspects which would be repulsive, were we in debt to an Adonis, or in the books of Apollo himself), but dogged as it were by the still more terrifying apparition of the soi-disant Major Lamb, the misguided Sydney was visibly and greatly altered. The ruddy health and the noisy spirits were gone; he no longer lounged about the house, or the grounds, whistling, like Cymon, “for want of thought,” or singing the “Boys of Kilkenny, or the Fortunes of Brian O’Linn,”

at the top of his good sonorous tenor ; he was grown wonderfully quiet and gentlemanlike, civilised by debt, and subdued and polished by mental anxiety.

The curate one day proposed at breakfast a walk to the Black Castle. Markham agreed cheerfully, but Sydney declined to accompany them, pretending a slight indisposition, but really apprehensive of encountering his formidable Castle Dawson acquaintance.

Hercules and Markham then armed themselves, more, however, to shoot hares than robbers, and proceeded on their expedition without him. The rector and Vivyan sauntered about together, quoting Milton and the Georgics, and conversing about Cambridge. Sydney passed the morning differently. One of the most troublesome of his creditors was Amby Hogg, the sexton of the parish. Amby had walked over from Red-cross that morning to press once more his little demand, being probably pressed himself to procure food and clothes for his dear though dirty children. One of Sydney's scouts (of

whom he retained several in his service) informed him of this arrival, and he retired to a favourite fastness of his in the haggard.

The bull-dog already mentioned was eminently useful on such occasions. It was a savage animal, called Brutus, that barked wickedly, and would have flown at a lion. Amby knew he was running a risk, but he suspected that Sydney was in the yard, and creditors are proverbially daring. Directly the poor shop-keeper raised the latch and put his nose into the haggard, Brutus sprang at him with a terrific growl. If he had not stepped back and banged the door to with the utmost celerity, his leg or his throat would have been in the bull-dog's fangs. One of the farm-servants ran up and Sydney called to him to lock the door. The boy executed the order promptly, being used to adopt such defensive measures; and then there was the following short parley between him and the creditor outside.

“What does your masther mane by keep-

ing a dog to ate the people?" growled the terrified sexton.

"My masther's dog ates nobody that oughn't to be aten," replied the gossoon through the key-hole.

Then they reviled one another like fishwives in Redcross, and the stable-boy, prompted by Sydney, who was close to him, but so placed as not to be discoverable through the key-hole, told lies enough to bring down lightning, if falsehood were a conductor of the electric fluid, which fortunately it is not, in a part of the world so "given to lying" as Ireland.

However, Sydney eluded once more his creditor's grasp, and after lurking some time longer in the straw, caressing his amiable and useful friend Brutus, he crept into the house to luncheon.

Some hours were then spent delightfully upon the water. Vivyan suggested it to Sydney, and Mrs. Woodward and Elizabeth were easily prevailed on to accompany them. Never was the surface of a summer sea smoother;

the water was alternately gray, purple, gold, and azure, as it reflected the rocks, the heath, the gorse, or the blue concave.

It was through Mrs. Woodward's medium that Frank had become acquainted with Elizabeth, that is to say with her mind, its cultivation, solidity, and loveliness. Carry possessed in an eminent degree the talent of developing the talents and characters of everybody round her who had talents and characters to be developed; and Elizabeth never revealed herself so freely as in her society, or expressed her thoughts and emotions with the same confidence. Her's was not the enthusiasm that shows itself in exaggeration and emphasis, or in looks, sighs, and gestures, but the enthusiasm whose very strength conceals it from observation; it was not the perfume of the flower, perceived and enjoyed by all the world, but the essence of its incense, yielded to few, perhaps entirely only to one. That was a glorious ripening day, not to the mountain crops alone, but in love's harvest. Vivyan fully experienced the rapturous feel-

ing of the oft translated and oftener imitated fragment of Greek song—

“Blest as the immortal gods is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
And sees and hears thee all the while
Softly speak, and sweetly smile.”

Never did he take so little part in conversation himself; the little he did say was either to Mrs. Woodward, or to Sydney, and chiefly on the subject of Cambridge; but this was to Elizabeth a most agreeable topic, so happy was she in the thought that her brother was on the point of being delivered, as it were, by the accomplished and amiable Vivyan, from the hateful influence of Mr. Dawson. However, silent or eloquent, Vivyan pleased her, and Mrs. Woodward perceived it that day for the first time, and inwardly resolved to make all the inquiries suggested by a motherly prudence respecting Vivyan's position and prospects, and to make them without delay.

The hour of dinner and of sunset was approaching when they ran their skiff ashore along-side of the small pier, under the flag

which was now gaily streaming in a delicious evening breeze. Sydney remained behind a moment to secure the boat by its chain and padlock. The ladies and Vivyan went up to the house, and found in the porch the curate and Markham, just returned from their excursion, and conversing with unusual eagerness with Mr. Spenser and his eldest daughter. The visit to the Black Castle had not been a fruitless one. The new comers shared the excitement directly they joined the group, and Sydney hearing the exclamations and the earnest speaking, hastened to the spot. As he came up he perceived that George Markham held something in his hand, and he heard him say—

“The robbery was committed by the owner of this pistol.”

Sydney advanced another step.

The pistol was his own—the pistol he had lost during his visit to Castle Dawson. It was natural that the incident should astonish and disconcert him; but his confusion was remarked by nobody. Indeed, his position

at the moment, and the shadows of the portico and its pillars, were sufficient to protect him from observation, even had attention been directed towards him, which of course it was not in any degree.

Candour at that moment would have saved Sydney and his family untold troubles. Had his father or his sisters ever seen the pistol in his possession, concealment would of course have been useless ; but he knew they had not, and to have acknowledged it would have made it indispensable to relate a multitude of incidents, which might possibly and undeservedly throw suspicion on Dawson. In such cases, too, the truth must be told at once, or it is too late. Sydney suffered the moment to pass, through his moral cowardice, and thus deprived himself of a testimony in his own favour, that would have rebutted all the circumstantial evidence which was only too soon accumulated against him.

Markham retained possession of the pistol, fully determined to trace its owner by every means in his power, and he heartily congratu-

lated his fair cousin, as they went to dress for dinner, upon such a practical result of their voyage to the Irish shores. But different thoughts from pistols and robberies were occupying the mind of Frank Vivyan. He returned from that day's boating over head and ears in love.

Sydney Spenser would that evening have given a thousand pounds for that small weapon, which had not cost him five. He shuddered to think that he had its fellow in his bedroom, and rising in the dead waste of night, he stole out of the house, unmoored the boat again, pushed out a hundred yards from shore, and flung it into the loch.

CHAPTER XLI.

CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

“Love! yield thy quiver and thine arrows up
To this triumphant stranger. Before him, Fortune!
Pour out thy mint of treasures; crown him sovereign
Of all his thoughts can glory to command.”

THE SUN'S DARLING.

THE next day Mrs. Woodward begged a private interview with Vivyan's friend and cousin. There was a directness about George Markham that inspired you with confidence almost on the first acquaintance: you saw that he was a man of worth and honour, of moral as well as physical courage, on whose word you might rely with profound assurance, and who would infallibly take the right-minded view of any practical question you proposed to him. Mrs. Woodward resolved to open her

mind to him freely upon a subject to her niece of paramount importance, and to young Vivyan of no small consequence also. Markham fully justified the reliance placed on him : he stated, with the utmost candour, his cousin's circumstances and prospects ; completely satisfied Carry as to his family and connexions, but entirely concurred in the opinion, that nothing could be more unfortunate than that Miss Spenser's affections should be engaged by a young man with no fortune but his talents, his attractions, and his hopes.

“ Fortune on neither side, Mr. Markham,” said Carry ; “ it may seem a strange objection,” she added, smiling, “ for a curate's wife to make, but poverty and happiness combined is the lot of few indeed in this world ; it has been mine, but I would not willingly see the risk run again by any girl I love, or, indeed, by any young man in whom I take the interest nobody can help taking in your charming friend.”

“ It is very well to despise money, Mrs.

Woodward, when we *have it* to despise," said Markham, with his blunt good sense, and inwardly resolving to hurry Vivyan away from this enchanted ground with relentless celerity. The resolution was taken too late. While Markham and Mrs. Woodward were conversing calmly on the necessity of loving with discretion, Vivyan was declaring his passion to Elizabeth in another place, without a thought of any thing but the sentiments with which she inspired him.

Markham left Carry to go in quest of his cousin, vexed with himself for not having kept a sharper eye upon his conduct, but not dreaming that matters had gone as far as in fact they had. Vivyan resembled Telemachus more than his cousin did Mentor.

"But you have made no declaration, Frank, I hope."

"I have," said Vivyan.

"Then I trust the girl has not been as rash as you."

"Her heart is mine," Vivyan answered; "but her hand will depend upon the approbation of her friends."

“Ah, that is always the phrase,” said Markham; “all imprudent marriages begin that way. With your little Irish property, Frank, you seem to have inherited the proverbial improvidence of the country. I fear you have not considered how remote is even the prospect of professional success for you who are still so young, and not yet of two years’ standing at college!”

Vivyan, of course, had considered nothing but that Elizabeth was fair, and that, like Shenstone’s shepherdess, “she was every way pleasing” to him. Consideration was left, as usual, to fathers, aunts, and friends. The usual conferences and debates took place. They ended in Elizabeth and Vivyan being both brought to acknowledge (she far more easily than he) the prudence of immediate separation. Under such circumstances it is the best thing that can be done, and the pity is that the prudence does not much diminish the pain of it to the parties principally concerned. Various are the results with which such separations take place: they are, in fact, appeals

to time and fortune, either to confirm rash engagements, by preserving their spirit and removing the obstacles to them, or to quash the original proceedings altogether, by giving the eye leisure to review its decree, or the fancy to revise its judgment.

But Vivyan seemed to be Fortune's darling, and the appeal to time in the present instance was not kept long pending. The cloud was scarce gathered over the heads of the rash lovers, before a propitious gale dispersed it, and the sun shone forth with unexpected lustre. Markham had sent orders for the *Circe* to be in readiness to sail. While she was wearing round the coast from the port of Derry, where she had been sent to undergo the repairs necessary after the storm, Markham, all impatience for her arrival, Vivyan miserable, though his understanding was convinced that his speedy departure for England was most advisable, a letter addressed to the latter, but in a hand which he did not recognise, arrived from Grenada. Vivyan was comparatively a rich man.

The previous letters acquainting him with the rapidly declining health of his friend, Mr. Everard, prepared him in some measure for the account of his death, which he now received; but he had never reckoned upon being enriched by that event, and it was with no little astonishment he now learned that his romantic benefactor, whom he had never seen, had bequeathed to him a large portion of his property, so considerable a sum as probably to yield an income of nearly two thousand a year.

Vivyan mourned sincerely, if not poignantly, the loss of the friend, who living had been so kind, and who dying was thus munificent. A mind more indifferent to self never informed a human frame. He only valued it now as it removed the barrier between himself and Elizabeth Spenser, and blotted out the word separation almost as soon as it was written. It is wretched to record a farewell in the first leaf of a love-story, but how seldom does a reprieve follow so close on the heel of a sentence!

There was, however, one little drawback; there always is. It was necessary that Vivyan should go to Spain to take some legal steps, in order to obtain the dominion over the property bequeathed to him. To Spain! He could scarcely have thought more of a voyage to China. A few weeks before, how the prospect of visiting one of the most picturesque and romantic of European kingdoms would have enchanted him! Now he infinitely preferred to linger on the shores of the little bay of Redcross; an humble parsonage had more charms for him than the Alhambra; and the barren hills of Tyrconnell, with scarce a ballad in their praise, pleased him more than the Sierra Morena, immortalised by the genius of Cervantes.

Vivyan was greatly discouraged by the thought of having to take this journey to the peninsula. Markham laughed at him, and indeed it did seem to be excessively unreasonable in Vivyan to be depressed by the prospect of an absence of two or three months, he who had only a few hours before been sentenced to a se-

paration of perhaps as many years. But it did dispirit him exceedingly, and he tried in vain to reason himself out of his melancholy, and to conceal what he considered his weakness from Elizabeth's observation. But she perceived his dejection, and it infected her. The voyage to Spain was an indispensable preliminary to their union, yet both one and the other contemplated it with alarm, and would willingly have long delayed it. Neither spoke of a presentiment, yet both felt something like a boding that the first obstacle to their happiness had only been surmounted to make room for another which might not be overcome so easily.

Had a foreshadowing of misfortune been visible to her mind's eye alone, events would soon have proved it only too clear a peep into futurity. A serious calamity was even now impending over the rector's family, and it was Vivyan's lot to leave the parsonage in extreme confusion and distress, though utterly unconnected with his engagement to Elizabeth Spenser.

To give the history of this, it is necessary to see what Mr. Dawson has been doing since we saw him last, or rather what fortune has been doing for him.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER XLII.

DUBLIN CASTLE.

“My good Mr. Dean, there are few that come here,
But have something to hope or something to fear.”

SWIFT'S WORKS.

WE have not seen Mr. Dawson since his gallant service to our heroine, nor heard, indeed, any news of him, except that he advanced a certain sum of money to Sydney, and was pitchforked into parliament by a little knot of priests and attorneys, who jobbed at that time the representation of the borough of Rottenham.

Another man would have presumed upon his brilliant exploit, and his now distinguished

position, and prosecuted his love-suit vigorously on the strength of both; but Dawson seemed above taking advantage of adventitious circumstances; he seemed to think nothing either of personal hazards, or personal advancement. It was little to him to save a lady's life at the risk of his own, and as to the House of Commons, that was only his proper sphere.

Such were the appearances, and they were certainly in his favour; but the truth was that for some time after his return for Rottenham he had too much business on his hands of a financial nature to leave him much time to think of his affairs at Redcross. Amongst other things, he had to make a clandestine sale in London of the books and pictures, and it was no easy matter to squeeze out of the Nathans and Mordecais money enough to cover the honestest of his electioneering expenses, although he had called the powers of earth and heaven to witness, at a public banquet, that his election had not cost him a single shilling.

There were several constituencies at that period (it is to be hoped there is more public virtue extant at present), which had a positive antipathy to respectable men. They exacted two qualifications, and only two, from their representatives; a certain sum of money, and a readiness to take any pledge required of them on the hustings. The necessary money Dawson managed to raise by the well-known fiscal operation called hook and crook (chiefly by selling the portraits of his fictitious ancestors); and as for the pledges, there was not the slightest difficulty on that head, Dawson's swallow being prodigious, only comparable to that of the giant in the French romance, whose ordinary diet was windmills. He pledged himself to dismember the British empire without a scruple, and would have entered into an equally solemn engagement to repeal the law of gravity and dissolve the universe, with just as little remorse of conscience. That great political bubble, the cry for the Irish Harem-Scarem, was then newly blown, and beginning to soar and glitter in the public eye;

fascinating with its rainbow colours all who were ignorant of its flimsy materials and utterly hollow nature. Some, no doubt, were honest in espousing the question, sincerely believing in its vitality, and flattering themselves that they had reasons to give for "the faith that was in them;" but to many it was only an hurrah, which they stupidly echoed, or a game which they profligately played. A frenzy against the union actuated some of the most popular constituencies, and a little phalanx of repealers was sent into the House of Commons, where (whether they retarded the prosperity of the country or not) they certainly did not advance their cause an iota. With this phalanx Dawson aspired to connect himself, and he was qualified to act with it in several important respects. He had studied eloquence in that great national school of oratory, whose fundamental principles are to divorce logic from argument, truth from statement, and decency from language; a system of rhetoric which considers violence strength, and rigmarole reasoning, and where

abuse and personality constitute the graces and delicacies of elocution. Such was Dawson's intellectual education for the senate. As to his patriotism and public spirit, they were hereditary; he prized his country too highly to sell her for a trifle, and he thought it the indefeasible right of an Irish gentleman to have a parliament of his own, wherein to carry his jobs. The last generation had driven their parliamentary trade in College Green, and he saw no reason why the present should be forced to do their dirty work at Westminster;—so far was Dudley a thoroughly sincere repealer.

With his parliamentary career, however, we have little to do, indeed nothing, except as far as it was curiously mixed up with the affairs of the Spensers.

The influence of Dawson as a public man was felt at the parsonage, and felt agreeably, at least by one member of the family, almost immediately after his return to parliament. Dawson's behaviour in the affair of the police was so very handsome, that it is a pleasure to

record it. In the first place he addressed an elaborate letter to the Chief Secretary, and represented to him that, though the peace of the country about Redcross was not disturbed, or in immediate danger, yet that circumstances had happened well calculated to alarm the family of a clergyman living in a wild and remote place in the mountains. This effect, he added, had unfortunately been produced in the present instance; the wife of the clergyman, "a most amiable and highly-accomplished lady" (so Mr. Dawson painted her), was an invalid, and a state of apprehension was not merely dangerous to her health, but to her life; in short, what he feared and predicted was that, unless the protection he asked was granted, the result would be that Mr. Spenser would be forced to leave the country, than which a greater calamity could not happen, inasmuch as, in losing him, they would lose not only a pious, learned, and exemplary clergyman, but a man whose services as a magistrate and a country-gentleman it was impossible to over-rate. Dawson, how-

ever, not merely wrote the letter, of which this was the substance, but he proceeded to the Castle and demanded an interview with the minister. There were circumstances connected with this first act of Mr. Dudley Dawson in his parliamentary character which incline us to describe it in some little detail.

He excited not a little attention as he swaggered one day about five o'clock into the waiting-room of the Castle, generally thronged about that hour with officials having appointments on business, deputations, suitors, claimants, expectants, political quacks hawking their sovereign remedies for all manner of public disorders and social evils, news-mongers, outrage-mongers, vote-mongers, pamphleteers (dirty fellows, some of them in more ways than one), reporters, messengers, loungers, tattlers, idlers, and spectators. It was capital to overhear the different little groups into which the assemblage was divided whispering together, and mutually despising and abusing one another as hirelings, place-hunters, and Castle-hacks. Mr. Trundle was there,

with his address to the Crown, and enormous chart of Loch Swilly, determined to see the Chief Secretary, who, upon his part, was equally determined not to see Mr. Trundle. Mr. Fosberry was there also, as great a bore in his way as Trundle, with his pockets full of samples of all kinds of guano, liquid and solid. He perfumed the anti-room in not the most agreeable way.

Mr. Trundle was acquainted with Dawson, and running up to him, congratulated him on his entrance into parliament, begged his signature to the address (forgetting that Dawson had signed it before), and desired at the same time to know whether the world had ever produced such another booby as Mr. Fosberry? At the very same moment Mr. Fosberry was regaling with one of his phials of guano the nostrils of a group of barristers of six years' standing (in chace probably of a vacant chairmanship), and expressing himself most contemptuously of Mr. Trundle and Loch Swilly. A well-known, clever, and popular attorney, Tom Conolly by name, was there amongst

the rest, having some little business of his own to transact, and beguiling the time before his interview with poignant jests and humorous anecdotes, keeping a large circle in fits of laughter. Conolly was the shrewdest, cleverest, pleasantest, jolliest limb of the law that ever the sweet south, whence he came (and which alone could have produced him), contributed to the hall of the Four-Courts. He had fun enough to make a dozen funny fellows, and he knew more law than all the place-hunting barristers put together. His electioneering talents were matchless; craft, daring, good-humour, with a strong voluble court-house elocution; a Machiavelli in the committee-room, a Wilkes on the hustings. His broad round face was as full of sensible drollery as the part of one of Shakspeare's clowns. It was intensely Irish; its music, if faces are musical, played "Patrick's day," or "the Boys of Kilkenny," audibly. He looked comedy and he spoke farce, the comedy Goldsmith's, the farce O'Keefe's. His lips quivered with mirth, and he had an eye for the hole in

every man's coat, or could pick one at his pleasure.

And comedy there was strewn thickly about him ; nobodies affecting to be somebodies ; people whom nobody knew pretending to know everybody ; fellows taking airs of independence, who were ready the next moment to clean the secretary's shoes, if ordered to do so ; men pretending to the most conscientious and exalted patriotism, yet having no other business there, but to solicit remuneration for their votes at an election. Some came to ask any thing ; some to ask every thing ; some to ask nothing, but only to make it known that something would be extremely acceptable. One declared that he cared not a fig for reward himself, but his friends would never let him rest until he preferred his claims ; another thought it his duty to offer his services where he felt he might be of use to the public ; a third abhorred the idea of office, but he had a sincere regard for the Whigs, and would accept any little post with a thousand a year, just to oblige them.

Then to hear some men talk of what they had done, and what they were doing, you would have concluded that they bore the whole weight of affairs on their own shoulders, and that viceroys and secretaries did nothing but give dinners. There was one man there who had been the prime mover in every event of importance which had taken place for a quarter of a century. He had actually done nine things out of ten, and what he had not actually done he had suggested, or advised. No matter who thundered, every clap was his; he had documents in his pocket to prove it. Then the degree of intimacy that subsisted between some of the shabbiest people present and the heads of the government was astonishing. One of the hack writers was evidently the bosom-friend of the Lord-Lieutenant, for he never called him any thing but Anglesea, just as if he had been a marquis himself, instead of being little above the rank of a printer's devil.

There was incessant ringing of bells, the Chief Secretary's bell, the Under Secretary's

bell, and other bells, which kept such a jangling as was never before heard, except in a Flemish town, or in Mr. Spenser's house, when his wife was hysterical. Tom Conolly pretended that he knew by the bells what the result of each interview was. If a bell rang sharply and waspishly, the last person introduced was no favourite; the Secretary was provoked by his application, and impatient to get rid of him. If it rang steadily, and not immediately after the bowing out, an impression had been produced, and the claim was worth consideration. All this time the messengers and junior clerks were bustling to and fro, some with red boxes, some with black, some with bundles of papers, some taking cards and letters from those in waiting, and promising to hand them in at the very first opportunity. Dawson arrested one of the messengers, and said, in an authoritative tone, that he wanted to see Lord —.

"Impossible, sir, to-day," said the ready fellow.

Dawson blazed up, and presenting his card,

ordered the messenger to hand it instantly to the Chief Secretary ; adding, so that the whole ante-room heard him—"I'm a member of parliament."

Everybody looked at the self-advertised legislator, and Conolly, who was acquainted with every thing and everybody, soon made it known who Dawson was, telling stories of his father and grandfather, and the Dawson nose, which forced his audience to hold their sides.

Dawson's card was handed in ; the messenger re-appeared, but, to the astonishment of everybody, the person summoned to have his audience was Mr. Fosberry. Triumphant at being so promptly admitted, he snatched one of his phials of guano from the hand of one of the barristers, and in doing so spilled half the contents upon the floor of the apartment, the smell of which was now vile enough to stifle a sanatory commissioner.

Every one held his nose but Mr. Trundle, who thought of nothing but the iniquity of the great man in receiving Fosberry before himself.

"This is enough," he muttered audibly, "to make a man a repealer. Here am I, having most important business,—no less than the improvement of Ireland,—kept waiting for two hours, and that booby, Fosberry, gets an audience before me."

"Lord —— doesn't know who you are, Trundle, or he wouldn't keep you waiting a moment," said Tom Conolly, winking at his friends.

"I must say," said an elderly gentleman, with a sour face and a querulous voice, in another group, "there is great inconvenience in this system of sending us over young English lords, who know no more about people in this country than they do of the Cherokee Indians; only think of Lord —— having been more than a year in Ireland, and yet it was only the other day he was aware of the fact that I have a son in the Church."

"His lordship ought to be impeached," said Conolly, *sotto voce*.

Now a bell rang petulantly.

"That's Stanley's," said the dirty pam-

phleteer, to show his intimacy with the noble lord who then held the agreeable office of Chief Secretary of Ireland.

“A short interview that,” said one of the barristers.

“Short but not *sweet*,” said the waggish solicitor.

At the same moment the messenger came up and said,

“Now, Mr. Dawson, this way.”

Dawson swaggered out of the anti-room, as he had swaggered into it; with difficulty avoided collision with Mr. Fosberry, who appeared to have been almost kicked out; and in a moment was ushered into the presence of Lord ——. Scarcely rising from his chair, the Secretary made a supercilious inclination of his head, as he motioned Dudley to a seat which was placed on the opposite side of the table, and between it and the door.

The Secretary had seen some bad specimens of popular representatives, but he thought the gentleman now before him was the sorriest he had yet seen. Dawson wriggled on his

chair as usual, endeavouring to assume a parliamentary look and tone, for it is one of the characteristics of such men to think there is a particular way of looking and speaking for every rank and situation of life. They are always acting, and never act well.

Dawson's business surprised the Secretary not a little. He expected to be solicited for a place in the Excise for an independent elector, or a colonial appointment for a brother, or a cousin, and he was agreeably disappointed when the application proved to be one on behalf of a clergyman, for his lordship had taken the clergy under his special protection, and indeed was accused of showing an undue partiality to the Church.

"The case you have stated, Mr. Dawson," he said, "is a strong one certainly; and if such is the state of the clergymen of the Established Church and their families in those parts of the country which are comparatively tranquil, what must be their condition in the actually disturbed districts? I trust you and your friends will seriously reflect upon it."

Here a messenger entered, and said that the Lord-Lieutenant desired to see Lord —— for a moment. His lordship rose, excused himself to Dawson, and saying he would return in a few minutes, left the room.

Dawson was not idle during the Secretary's absence. He looked over several of his lordship's papers, with the feeling that an honest government can have no wish to conceal any part of its conduct; then he examined the traces left upon some blotting-paper with that sort of appetite for truth which despises or neglects no source of information; and he was beginning to amuse himself with the scraps of a torn letter, just trying if he could arrange them in their original order and position (like a Chinese puzzle), when the minister reappeared. Dawson's gentlemanlike occupation would have been discovered, if he had dropped the fragments, so he crumpled them up and put them in his pocket.

"Mr. Dawson," said the Secretary, without sitting down, "I was sorry to be under the necessity of refusing Mr. Spenser's application

for a military force—indeed, he wanted some pieces of cannon, which was quite out of the question—but, to the extent of a small detachment of police, I have no objection to comply with his wishes and yours. As long as I hold office, the clergy shall be protected, and whenever you have any favour to ask on their behalf I shall be always happy to see you either here or in London.”

As he made this speech, he bowed the member out of the room as adroitly as if he had studied the rules Mr. Taylor gives in his “Statesman” for putting an abrupt end to official conferences.

When Dawson passed through the waiting-room again, it was less crowded than before. The droll solicitor had departed, and so had the least hopeful of the briefless barristers; but the sour old man with the son in the Church was standing his ground still, and so was poor Mr. Trundle, who might as well have been seeking a personal interview with the Ottoman Porte.

Leaving the Castle, Dawson proceeded in-

stantly to the office of a newspaper, with the editor of which he was intimate, and procured the insertion of a short paragraph to the effect that "Dudley Dawson, Esq., M.P. for Rottenham, transacted business to-day with the Chief Secretary." He then paraded the principal streets for half an hour, with a cigar in his mouth, in company with two more legislators of the same stamp; after which he dined with Bob Sharkey, who called him his "honourable friend" at least a hundred times in the course of the evening.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CUPID AMONGST THE CONSTABLES.

“ Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten.”

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE police party which, in consequence of Mr. Dawson's exertions at head-quarters, were sent to the rectory to garrison it against dangers which were purely imaginary, consisted (as we have seen) of a chief constable and three sub-constables, all respectable men, and one of them a particularly good-looking young fellow, whose language, as well as whose features, intimated that his birth and education were above his position in life. The name of this young man was Edward

Peacock; he was tall, his figure was good, he wore a private's dress in an officer-like manner, and in short the coarse cloth in his coat did not altogether conceal the gentleman. The fact was that he was a younger son of a younger brother of a good family in the south of Ireland. His father, without land, capital, or profession, had committed matrimony without an extenuating circumstance; his wife was prolific, his income small; the rest may be imagined; he was only too happy to procure for his eldest son a subordinate appointment at the Castle, and his second was the handsome young sub-constable now doing holiday duty at Mr. Spenser's. This Edward Peacock had one fault—at least in a policeman it was one—he had a very susceptible heart, and was very apt to take tender impressions wherever he happened to be stationed. In truth, he would have been long ago dismissed from the force, only that he was exceedingly brave and active when not under the sway of Venus. Already he had been removed three times from quarters where his amorous tempera-

ment had involved either himself or some equally tender-hearted damsel in embarrassments. His last scrape had been a serious one (the object of his transitory admiration having been the daughter of a gentleman of good fortune), and it had occasioned his abrupt transfer from the county of Longford to his present station, where directions had been given to his superior officer to keep a sharp eye upon him, and instantly report his first relapse into "*la belle passion*." Peacock himself had been made sensible of the indiscretion of his conduct, and it was clear that he would never offend again—until the next time.

One of Mrs. Spenser's cravings—almost the only one she had that was innocent—was her craving for flowers. It was part of Miss M'Cracken's regular daily duty to ravage the gardens and conservatories, to gratify this passion; and she was a Tamerlane in her devastations, thinking of nothing else but how to ingratiate herself with her mistress by the enormous size of her bouquets. It happened on a certain morning, that Edward

Peacock was on guard at the door of the green-house—guarding the geraniums and balsams, I presume, for there was nothing else to be sentinelled—when Miss M'Cracken arrived as usual with her flower-basket on her left arm, her scissors and the key of the green-house in her right hand, meditating havoc to every plant that was in bloom or blossom. Now Miss M'Cracken, though so crafty and servile, made decidedly a pretty flower-girl; she looked particularly smart and grisettish of a morning; and when she had no great distance to go, only about the grounds or the garden, her out-door dress in general was a coquettish little French cap, with gay ribbons, and a short scarlet cloak, which, over a white frock, looked very smart and distinguished. Very little attention her governess-ship paid the policeman as she glided demurely along, and he, upon his part, tried to be equally inattentive to her, but scarlet is a very attractive colour; it seizes the eye whether we will or not, and so it happened quite unavoidably that the eye of the young sub-

constable did rest for a moment upon the pretty and piquant Lucy. A plague upon keys ! They certainly hold a high place amongst the minor ills of human life. Twenty, aye a hundred times over, had Miss M'Cracken opened that glass door without the slightest difficulty ; yet now the key stuck in the lock and refused to turn one way or the other. Miss M'Cracken was never very patient, and she soon grew provoked with the key, just as she would have done with one of her pupils, but still the key would not open the lock. She set down her basket and tried it with both her hands, uttering little peevish exclamations, scolding the key for stupidity and obstinacy ; not loud enough, however, to be very distinctly heard by Peacock. Then she looked into the lock (and she had an eye sharp enough to pick one), lest there might be something obstructive in it—a leaf, or a snail, perhaps ; but she could see nothing, and she tried the key again, but to no purpose, though she used all her strength and uttered more of her little angry sub-audible

objurgations. It was full time for the policeman, therefore, to step forward to help her ; it was no part of his positive duty, but it was civil, and policemen are expected to be civil to every body.

“Allow *me* to try, ma’am,” he said, advancing deferentially, and bowing to Red-Riding-Hood.

“I suppose it is not the right key,” she said, scarcely looking at the person who accosted her, but presenting the key to him at the same time.

The sub-constable took it respectfully, not without an eye to the governess’s rosy fingers, which peered out of her half-handed gloves. He put the key into the lock—

“Open sesame,” said he, and at the first trial the glass-door flew open.

Miss M’Cracken was surprised to meet a policeman who had read the Arabian Nights, and she could not help smiling as she slightly curtsied and thanked him. It would have been civil to have asked him to step in and look at the plants, but she was in too

great a hurry to fill her basket, and commenced her ravages, nipping, snipping, clipping, and whipping into her basket every thing odoriferous or gay that was not beyond or above her reach. Peacock was fond of flowers, and knew more about them than was necessary for his profession, so he could not resist the temptation of entering this palace of Flora, though not invited by the governess. However, he entered modestly, and was very careful not to follow the scarlet mantle. The scarlet mantle, however, came round to him in the course of its ravages, and surprised him gazing admiringly on a group of balsams. He retired a little, making awkward excuses, and Miss M'Cracken began to fell the delicate green stalks; but there was one which she could not come at even standing on tip-toe, and she was glad to avail herself of the aid of the tall sub-constable, who, having the scissors in his hand, not only cut her down the particular plant she longed for, but a great many other beauties also, which were far beyond the range of her arm. In fact, she never

carried off such a booty before, and she could not but look thankful and ask her assistant whether he liked flowers.

“*I love them,*” he answered, heightening the expression used by Miss M‘Cracken. She could not but remark the improvement, nor help observing, as she took the scissors from his hand, that it was nearly as white as her own.

“You were never in a green-house before, I dare say,” she continued, condescendingly. He smiled, and said, “Pardon me, we had a larger one than this at my father’s.”

Miss M‘Cracken concluded that the civilised and communicative policeman was the son of a seedsman, or florist, and there was no more conversation between them, for the children came running into the garden, calling their governess with their shrill voices, and Peacock saw a man approaching at some distance who, he suspected, was the chief constable watching his movements, so that he was glad to make his retreat in time.

It so happened, however, that several mornings successively, the green coat and the red mantle met either in the garden, or the conservatory. Peacock, perhaps, thought it his duty to prevent a civil war breaking out afresh amongst the roses, or to keep the factious lilies in order ; and Miss M'Cracken was not sorry to have a tall young man to help her to crop those flowers which had hitherto been safe from her depredations. But the upshot was that they knew each other better and better every day ; before the end of a week the susceptible Peacock was once more over head and ears in love, and Lucy, on her part, made up her mind to receive his addresses, having at length found an admirer who was not only a handsome man, but a gentleman, with a name she fancied, and the other qualities which she considered indispensable in a husband. As to the swain's present position, it only served to throw an air of romance over his fortunes, and besides, there were precedents enough of young men, of

even higher birth, compelled, by adverse circumstances, to begin their career in the lowest ranks of both civil and military service.

Meanwhile, the chief constable had not been inattentive to what was going on. As Peacock had little to do but to fall in love, so his chief had little to do but to watch his proceedings, which he did so warily, that Peacock flattered himself that for once in his life he had managed to keep his love affairs secret. One morning, after a longer colloquy than usual with his fair, he was suddenly confronted by his superior, in a retired part of the garden, whither he had repaired, either to compose a sonnet, or to indulge in a reverie. They had a short, sharp, decisive conversation.

“You seem partial to the garden,” said the chief constable.

“The moss-roses are so beautiful,” said Peacock, colouring like one of them.

“Humph,” said the chief, “I know the sort of rose you come here every morning to look at.”

"Hear me," said the young man, abashed and imploringly.

"Hear *me*, sir," said the other; "this is your third offence, and it is not only a breach of duty, but a violation of your word of honour. I shall not only report it to headquarters, but I shall take it upon myself to act in a summary way, so far as to send you up this night to Dublin."

"Hear me, sir," said poor Peacock, earnestly.

"I will not, sir," rejoined the chief with warmth, "you shall go up to town by this night's mail, so be ready to start from Redcross in half-an-hour from the present moment." So saying, the officer turned on his heel, and the desperate Peacock went in quest of Miss M'Cracken, resolved to disobey his orders and brave all the consequences. But he had a prudent young woman to deal with, who, though she was astonished and distressed at a blow so unexpected, was far from being thrown off her centre by it. She would not hear of her lover not only flinging away his bread for

the present, but ruining all his chances of promotion, and she not only advised but enjoined him to obey his commanding officer.

“I shall be dismissed,” he said, ruefully.

“Better be dismissed for love, Edward, than for insubordination,” said the shrewd Lucy.

“You are right, dear Lucy,” said Peacock. — “Oh, if I had only a little parliamentary influence,” — he added, “all would be right soon.”

A thought seemed to flash across her mind, but she said nothing, and parted with her lover on the spot, much firmer than he was, and crying very sparingly, if at all, for there never was a girl so little tearful as Lucy M'Cracken, though she was the cause of tears to others occasionally, but that, to be sure, was in the way of her profession.

Going straight up to her own little room, she sat down, and wrote a letter to the only member of parliament she knew, namely, the member for Rottenham; told him the whole tale, how she had lost her heart to a friendless

gentleman in disguise, and earnestly besought his interposition in the gentleman's behalf, renewing at the same time her protestations of steadfast devotion to his interests at the parsonage, and assuring him that she was resolved to remain in her present situation for another year, notwithstanding her engagement to Peacock.

Dawson was only too happy to have so fair an opportunity of confirming his hold upon Lucy. He not only exerted his own influence for Edward Peacock, but induced another member of parliament, a friend and crony of his, to work for him too. Day after day they besieged the Castle, until their faces were as familiar as that of the state-porter. The job was not an enormous one, but a job it was, and of course it was prosecuted with zeal and assiduity. Had Peacock done some signal public service, and not had two members of parliament to back him, the secretary would probably have never heard his name; as it was, he not merely escaped the unpleasant consequences which would have followed in the

case of another man, but he was actually promoted for his misbehaviour in the Police to a place in the Excise. As this appointment, though worth a hundred a-year, and one that a gentleman might becomingly hold, involved residence in Dublin, the amorous simpleton grumbled exceedingly at the arrangement which removed him to it, and wrote a romantic epistle to his Lucy, full of quotations from Moore and Petrarch, about the insupportable horrors of absence, and offering, of course, to fling office and salary to the winds, and live with her in a cottage, a grotto, or a tent. Not a girl in Christendom had less of such nonsense about her than the young woman to whom all this sentimental stuff was addressed. Lucy had no notion of living in tents or grottos, nor indeed had her lover any very serious thoughts of it either. In fact, he had already made similar Arcadian propositions to several fair maidens, one or two of whom were silly enough to have embraced them, had things been suffered to go to such a length. Miss M'Cracken thought him very simple,

and would have told him so, had she thought it prudent. She was overjoyed at the success of Mr. Dawson's kind offices, congratulated her lover in the tenderest manner on his good fortune, convincing him that he was a lucky fellow, while at the same time she studiously kept the flame burning, which made him feel that his lot could never be completely blessed until she was at his side to share his prosperity and continue to promote it. In fact, though Lucy was not much alive to the horrors of absence, she was fully conscious of its dangers. She had got some little inklings of her Edward's past career in love, and she soon became fully as anxious to join him in Dublin as he was to join her in the country. The difference was, that she was a girl of business, and he was a youth of sentiment. The policy of following her lover as soon as possible no sooner impressed itself upon her, than she cast about in her ingenious mind for the practical means of accomplishing it. To resign her situation would have been the simplest course of all, but that would have

been imprudent in two ways, involving both the loss of another year's salary, which she was bent on securing, but the abandonment of a position in which she might fairly hope to turn Dawson's interest to still better advantage. In this difficulty it occurred to her to make more effectual use of her mistress's nerves than she had yet done, and by a bold stroke accomplish the long-desired object of the migration of the family.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DAWSON'S SECRET JOURNEY TO REDCROSS.

"There is no secresy comparable to celerity, like the motion of a bullet in the air, which flieth so swift as it outruns the eye."

BACON.

WHEN Dawson had established his claims on the friendship of Miss M'Cracken, in the politic manner related in the foregoing chapter, he began to turn in his mind in what way he could make her gratitude serviceable to his own objects. Indeed, he did not rely on her gratitude altogether, and took care therefore to represent what he had already done for Peacock as but a trifle compared with what he might hereafter be able to do for him. For it is the well-known way of the world to be more influenced by favours expected than

favours received; at least, it was the way of Miss M'Cracken.

Upon the whole, Dawson thought it would be wise to have a personal interview with Lucy as soon as possible; matters of delicacy are sometimes managed so much better, and with so much less hazard, by conversation than in writing. Another matter, too, required immediate looking after in the country. The busts were missing amongst the property transported to London, and he was not so anxious on account of their intrinsic value, as of the risk of detection to which they might expose him, were they to fall into the hands of suspicious or inquisitive people. Actuated by these two motives, he made a rapid and secret journey to Redcross; arrived at the village, while all the Hoggs and M'Swynes were immersed in slumber; and by the light of the stars and the waning moon, being well acquainted with the country, walked alone across the shadowy hills in the direction of the rectory.

Had he been an innocent man, how the

freshness, the intense quiet, the balm and the cool of that romantic walk at that spiritual hour would have charmed him ! Nature does not reveal herself to men like Dawson. The first heraldic streaks of day were just visible in the orient as he gained the summit of the ridge, commanding the earliest glimpse of the loch and the country on its further side.

“Jocund day

Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain-top.”

An upper sea of fleecy vapour hung over the waters of the fiorde; and the hills above the still and sequestered parsonage had the aspect of an island emerging from this silvery ocean, the mansion itself being as yet only dimly visible. As he descended towards the loch, the haze grew thinner and thinner; and the eastern tints brighter, until at length, suddenly as a bright arrow darts from the string, an horizontal ray of the most glorious crimson smote the summits of the clump of pines on the rocky headland to the right, and proclaimed the day.

Gorgeous miracle it is ! In the union of

repose with splendour, what sign and wonder in all the range of nature can compare with the sun's rising? How sweet, yet how stupendous; its beauty how majestic, its magnificence how calm! The commonest, yet royalest and solemnest of all spectacles, a prodigy wrought in the heavens every morning, oldest and newest of celestial glories, the Advent and Apocalypse of Light. The powers of darkness are defeated, the spirits of life and health resume their empire, a general song—the carol of birds, the strains of poets, the hymns of early pilgrims—greet the renewed dispensation. Earth hails it with a thousand voices, and ocean welcomes it with unnumbered smiles. Cheering, vivifying, purifying, strengthening hour; dear alike to genius and devotion, precious to virtue and to beauty.

But what cared the profligate young man, who had now all those purple mountains to himself, and seemed the only waking witness of the enchanting change that was in progress—what cared he for the loveliness that

was beneath and above and round about him? As he stood, ankle-deep in the rich heather, which decked his unworthy feet with pearls, a flood of rosy light bathed him, but there was no light in his breast, save the lurid one of passion and low designs. To him, beauty was but an object of appetite, and virtue only a difficulty to be evaded, or an obstacle to be overthrown. Now he could distinctly see the picturesque abode of the Spensers, the residence of the fair, wise girl, on whom, with folly equal to his presumption, he had fixed such affections as he had. The exhalation still lingered, but it was now transparent, and gave an airy beauty to the substantial objects discerned through it. The mountain behind looked fanciful, and the irregular house, with its raiment of roses, and its pale gray wings, one of which was the library, looked speculative and dreamy, like its master's mind. A parsonage in the air it seemed, such as Mab constructs with her no materials in the visions of young divines.

The descent of the mountain-side was rapid ; the boat was in its wonted receptacle ; Dawson was in his lusty prime, and Mr. Woodward could scarcely have pushed across the water with greater expedition. He did not land, however, at the usual point, but higher up, in a little cove, surrounded with a wilderness of heath and wild shrubs, immediately under the pine-clad promontory, and only accessible from the land by one approach, and that so steep and so tangled that it was rarely visited by any one, and known, indeed, only to very few ; but Dawson had a sort of instinctive knowledge of crypts and caverns and all manner of solitary places. The clock of the parsonage struck four as he stepped out of the boat upon the narrow strand. He sat down on a lichened stone, and taking out his watch held it in his hand, evidently expecting the arrival of some person, or some event. A quarter of an hour elapsed and he grew impatient and began to look round about him, but he had a small horizon for circumspection, being enclosed on

all sides by a wall either of rock or of wild vegetation. Presently there was a slight rustling in the heather and bushes not far from him. He looked to the right and left, but observed no motion; it might have been only a linnet or a hare; still, however, the rustling continued, and grew more audible. "She is coming," he said to himself; and at the same instant he was struck on his hat with a few small cones of the pines, and, raising his head, saw a girl, wrapped in a shawl of gray plaid, cautiously descending by the precipitous path already mentioned. She had plucked the cones, on discovering Dawson, and thrown them down upon him to advertise him of her coming.

Lucy M'Cracken was strong, agile, and daring, equal to any thing that any girl of her age and size, perhaps indeed that any young woman was equal to. Dawson thought her very pretty that morning, and she certainly did look attractive enough, particularly as the consciousness that she was not where she ought to be at that hour,

and in such company, made her a little fearful, and her fears gave her a touch of maidenly bashfulness, which was just the charm she lacked most. She had exchanged her red mantle for the gray shawl, probably because she was less anxious to look an Aurora in Dawson's eyes, than to pass through the rocks and woods as unnoticed as possible.

Time was precious; both seemed equally aware of it, and but few moments were wasted in civilities and compliments. Dawson's object was to gain over Lucy to his interests; Lucy's was simply to gratify and flatter Dawson. He was inordinately vain, and she was shrewd, dexterous, and insinuating. She could not, or would not, see any serious obstacle to the accomplishment of his designs upon Elizabeth Spenser. He spoke of the prejudices that existed against him.

"They are nothing but prejudices, sir, and of course they will wear out in time," said Miss M'Cracken.

"You think, then, my prospects are fair?" said Dawson.

Lucy smiled ironically.

"Fair," she said; "as if any gentleman ever stood in a better position than you do, to win any lady in the land. I grant Miss Elizabeth is handsome—if she was not, Mr. Dawson, you would not be the man to admire her—but I think even you will not say she is positively a beauty; so that why a gentleman like you should not succeed with her, or with a much greater match, is more than I can understand, to say nothing of the fact that you are her brother's bosom friend, and that only a week ago you saved her life so gallantly, at the imminent hazard of your own."

"Well, really," said Dawson, tickled by this speech; but Lucy had not finished.

"I am sure I don't know what fair prospects are, if yours are not fair," she continued, earnestly; "you have the three grand recommendations of family, fortune, rank—and—and—I could mention another thing

that can't but be much in your favour, Mr. Dawson, if I dared." She looked at him in a very peculiar way, and then she looked down, and played with the strings of her little black apron.

"Say all that you think—every thing that comes into your mind, my dear Lucy," said Dawson, seizing her hand.

"It was only this, sir," she answered, with admirably counterfeited modesty and reluctance, "I *do* think you such a very handsome man."

Dawson was exactly of the same opinion himself, so that he was not electrified, though greatly pleased, by the last link of Miss M'Cracken's argument. The personal hit told so well, that she tried another without a moment's interval.

"The first time I ever saw you, sir, was riding with Mr. Sydney; did any one ever tell you, sir, that you look particularly well on horseback?"

We have seen that Dawson plumed himself on his horsemanship, and indeed he

rode extremely well; only that his seat was a little theatrical, in keeping with the general ostentation of his character.

It was now time for him to take his part in the conference.

“I must see her,” he said, “I have never seen her since that night upon the island.”

“So much the better, perhaps,” said Lucy, “your sudden disappearance had a good effect, and besides, you were much better employed getting into parliament; but now that you have got such a fine feather in your cap, I do not see why you should keep in the back ground a moment longer,—though I would not advise you, sir, to do any thing too hastily.”

“Mrs. Spenser is my enemy, Lucy, and the consequence is, that I am not invited here;—Sydney has told me so repeatedly.”

“Can you do nothing to make her your friend, Mr. Dawson? You have no notion how fond she is of getting presents—a parrot, a French watch, or any trifle of the kind would make a wonderful change—some

ladies are so shocking mercenary—even such a pretty ring as that on your little finger.”

“This ring is for you, Lucy,” said Dawson, taking her hand again.

“Oh, Mr. Dawson!”—but she did not decline the ring, which was a small emerald, handsomely set, which he had purchased in Dublin, expressly for the corrupt purpose to which he now applied it.

“I am in hopes,” he went on to say, while Lucy was admiring and even kissing the brilliant transferred to her hand, “*I am in hopes* that my exertions in the police affair will be of some little use to me.”

Lucy assured him that the exertions he alluded to had already been of the greatest service to him in the quarter alluded to, and “I am sure,” she added, with all the outward signs of grateful emotion, “I ought to be thankful to you, too, Mr. Dawson, as only for you I should never have seen or known my dear Edward.”

“It was not an easy job to manage, I assure you,” said Dawson.

He then told her of his letter to the Chief Secretary, and lamented that he had not kept a copy, as it would not fail to impress Mrs. Spenser most favourably towards him, she was spoken of there in terms of such glowing compliment.

Lucy instantly recollected that her lover's brother held a subordinate place at the Castle, and that she had no doubt but that she could manage, through him, to procure a copy of the letter, or, indeed, even the letter itself, if it were required.

"A copy would do," said Dawson, "you could let Mrs. Spenser see it, as if it came to your hand by mere accident."

This little matter was easily settled ; but he subsequently hit upon a better mode of turning the letter in question to good account.

Dawson was most grateful to his fair friend for her zeal and ingenuity in his service.

"Rely upon it, Lucy," he said, "I will do all in my power for your Edward ; I never met a young man who so captivated me on a short acquaintance ; I am greatly mistaken

if he is not destined to make a splendid figure in the world."

The eyes of the worldly-minded Lucy glittered. Her love was one of those adulterated varieties of the passion in which other passions, particularly avarice and ambition, are very largely mixed.

She was on the point of bringing her honourable friend to promise something specific for the advancement of Peacock, when a loud barking at no great distance threw both parties into the greatest consternation.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Lucy, pale as ashes, "that's Pedro's bark."

"Who is Pedro?" whispered Dawson, scarcely less agitated.

"Mr. Markham's dog; oh, what will become of me?" She paid no attention to the effect which the name of Markham had upon her companion, to whom it conveyed the fact that the young Englishmen, whom he had seen on the island, had been ever since the guests of Mr. Spenser. He moved a step aside to conceal the passion which suddenly

seized him, and made him for the instant thoughtless of danger. When he turned again, the nimble Lucy was springing up the steep bank, to hide herself in the darkest thicket she could find. He naturally thought that she feared to be detected in his society under circumstances so suspicious, but the false girl had another and still stronger motive (which will be disclosed in time) for shunning all observation at that hour, and she succeeded in regaining the house and her own bed-room without any eye but that of Heaven upon her doings.

It was altogether a busy and exciting morning with her; a whim took her to school the children before breakfast, and in the course of the proceedings she detected, or fancied she detected, little Arthur Spenser in an offence which to her pure eyes was unpardonable—an aberration from the paths of truth. She corrected the child severely, and immediately after sat down to her desk, and with the rod actually before her with which she had punished deceit, wrote a letter

to her lover in town, directing him to procure a surreptitious copy of Dawson's letter to the Chief Secretary. This done, she carefully arranged her hair and her dress, and went down to breakfast, for she now breakfasted with the family, though she still dined with the children at two o'clock. Several times during the meal she thought of poor Mr. Dawson, in the little alcove under the hill, probably still besieged by Pedro. She would have carried the honourable gentleman his breakfast, if she could have done it clandestinely, but that was impossible ; so she ate her own heartily, for both her mind and her body had been exercised that morning.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE THREATENING NOTICE.

“It is the nature of extreme self-lovers, that they will set a house on fire, an it were but to roast their eggs.”

BACON’S ESSAYS.

ON the heathery verge of the picturesque point overhanging the senator’s hiding-place the rector had long ago placed a semi-circular bench of rough-hewn timber, affording seats for about half-a-dozen persons, and as the view from it was fine, and the ascent, by a winding path, not quite as hazardous as that of Mont Blanc or Chimborazo, it was a common thing to loiter an hour there, chatting or reading, musing or speculating. Some elegant sermons had there been imagined and partly written; much

solid sense had been talked there, and much airy nothing too; there the rector and Father Magrath had often bewailed the discords which raged between two branches of the same great Christian family; there the rector and curate had often wrangled about Demosthenes and Plunket; and there had Carry and Elizabeth held many a little council of charity for the benefit and improvement of the poor of the neighbourhood, and raised many an orison for the peace and happiness of everybody round about them.

On the day in question they resorted with their books and work to this favourite haunt soon after breakfast. It was still a sombre but sweet morning; the lingering haziness of the atmosphere mitigated the solstitial heat, and beautifully softened every object by land and water. The surface of the latter was motion at rest; the wing of a sea-bird agitated it visibly. The silence was profound, save where a grasshopper or two chirped in the fern, a gull screamed as he lazily flitted over the loch, or the faintest distinguishable murmur reached the ear from

the ripple of the water upon the beach beneath. Indeed, Carry had to raise her cap, and a cloud of her bright brown hair also, before she was able to catch this almost noiseless sound. Elizabeth neglected her book, but her aunt's needle was industrious, and the musical tongues were busy also. Carry's voice was remarkably decided, clear, distinct, and fluent; Elizabeth's was a liquid, loving, warbling one. They were discoursing of many things and many persons, when Mr. Spenser joined them, in extreme agitation. He held a piece of soiled paper in his hand, with some writing scrawled upon it.

"Carry, my dear," he said, sitting down beside her; but he could say no more, he was so moved and out of breath, and he placed the paper in her hands, with a gesture that showed how much he was affected by it.

It was a threatening notice, which he had found himself, only a few minutes before, posted on the old fig-tree close to the door of the garden. The document ran as follows :

“TITHES—TITHES—TITHES!

“I hereby caution the Rev. Mr. Spenser to have no more to say or to do with the tithes of the parish of Redcross, and to refund what he has received for the six months last past. Any person who pays tithes to him, or to any other parson whatsoever, will meet a villain’s fate, which is sharp and sudden death; so let them mark and digest the consequence. If Mr. Spenser (or any others) violates my rules and regulations, I will pay him an early visit, and all the police and troops in the county will not save him. Here is the coffin prepared for extortioners and robbers of the poor.

“Given under my hand,

“Captain KILL-PROCTOR or KILL-PARSON
(as the case may be).”

Carry could not help smiling while she read this proclamation of the blood-thirsty unknown, to which a representation of a coffin was annexed, in the established form of such instruments.

“For myself,” said Mr. Spenser, recovering his speech, “I do not attach as much

weight as some people do to notices like this, which are so easily forged, and are often, I believe, nothing but malicious hoaxes; at the same time, it is most unfortunate that such tricks should be played just now."

"If you take my advice, Valentine," said Carry, regarding the paper contemptuously, "you will tear it in pieces this moment, throw it into the loch, and not say a word about it to a human being."

"Do, papa," cried Elizabeth, "it has all the look of a foolish forgery; destroy it, and do not give the author the satisfaction of knowing that he has even succeeded in alarming you. Of all things, do not let mamma hear of it."

"Ah," said the rector, "the mischief I fear is done—she has heard of it already."

"Oh, Valentine," exclaimed Carry, about to reproach him with having communicated such a thing to his wife, of all people in the world, but he had his defence ready; it appeared that Rebecca was just coming out of the garden at the moment, and had been present when he and George Markham discovered and took down the notice.

“It can’t be helped then,” said Mrs. Woodward, “we must only do the best we can under the circumstances, and try to trace the writer, who I dare say has as little notion of shooting either a proctor or a parson as I have myself.”

Mr. Spenser wished Carry to accompany him back to the house. She did so, and left Elizabeth with no other society but her book and her maidenly meditations. She had not enjoyed these excellent companions many minutes when she heard a step close to her, and concluded it was either her father or her aunt returned;—imagine her astonishment and dismay when she beheld Dawson!

He was equally unprepared to meet Elizabeth, and far more embarrassed than she was, as he had no good excuse to give for so abrupt an appearance in her presence. He had merely clambered up the height to gain a path by which he knew he could in all probability effect his retreat in safety. It was necessary to speak, but not so easy to say any thing apropos under the circumstances. His dress disordered by travel, and

his extreme confusion of manner, impressed her with the notion that he was intoxicated. He began by stammering out something to the effect that he was delighted to find she had not seriously suffered by the late accident, and made a number of inconsistent and needless apologies for being so late in waiting upon her after it.

“ Oh, no, Mr. Dawson,” said Elizabeth, tremulously, “ you have no apologies to make; it is I that have cause to regret not having had an earlier opportunity of thanking you, as indeed I do, most sincerely.”

“ Don’t thank me, Miss Spenser,” he replied, “ what I did is not worth your thinking of; all I hope is, that you don’t consider me utterly unworthy of the honour I had on that occasion.”

“ Indeed, sir,” replied Elizabeth, still more nervously, “ I hope I feel every thing that I ought towards a gentleman who so nobly hazarded his life for mine.”

“ Who would willingly have sacrificed it,” interrupted Dawson, vehemently, and sitting down close to her.

“I am inded very grateful,” she said, her voice husky with agitation, and with difficulty preventing herself from withdrawing herself to a distance from him.

“Don’t say grateful, charming Miss Spenser,” said Dawson, in a low deep voice, passionate more than tender.

Elizabeth affected not to hear, and tremblingly inquired whether he had seen her father or her brother.

“No,” he replied, “I have only this moment arrived in the country: I am on my way to Castle Dawson;—I came here to see you, and nobody but you.”

“Me, sir!” said Elizabeth, recovering a little self-possession, as the occasion for it increased.

“You,” said Dawson, gazing at her,—“to tell you that I admire you—that I adore you.”

“Oh, Mr. Dawson,” said Elizabeth, starting up amazed and indignant—“I cannot listen to this,—excuse me, I must return to the house.”

“Not until I tell you how I love you,” cried Dawson, attempting to seize her hand,

which she nimbly withdrew, her face glowing with resentment, while her frame quivered with alarm.

“Not until I tell you that I love you, that I have long loved you, that I will never cease to love and adore you,” he pursued violently, now succeeding in holding her, which he did, however, but for an instant, for she was robust as well as fair, and she liberated herself with a single strong effort, and fled down the hill, not even keeping the path, but rushing like a fawn through the copse and heather. She never ceased to run until she gained the skirts of the lawn, where she met Carry Woodward, and almost fainted in her arms. Carry and Elizabeth agreed, after a long consultation, to communicate what had taken place to the rector himself only; they feared to let Sydney know that his dangerous friend was again in the country; but it was indispensable that Mr. Spenser should write to Dawson without delay, to complain of his unwarrantable intrusion (particularly in so clandestine a manner), on the privacy of his glebe and his

family, and acquaint him, unambiguously, with the utter hopelessness of his design to gain the affections of his daughter.

The rector was, indeed, as much incensed at Dawson's conduct, when it was related to him by his sister, as it was in his placid nature to be incensed at any thing; but the letter he wrote at Carry's suggestion (unfortunately not her dictation) was far below the mark, both in vigour and precision. It was not much to be wondered at. The device of the threatening notice had succeeded only too completely. Mrs. Spenser had already extorted a promise from him that he would remove to Dublin with the least possible delay. There was an end of his pastoral life, an end of his rural happiness; all the many ties of duty, affection, taste, benevolence, love of ease, love of retirement, love of nature, which bound him to his picturesque parish, and simple, loyal, attached parishioners, were to be torn asunder, and the gentle-natured man poignantly felt it.

Several hours elapsed before he could muster up the courage to confess to his sister

and daughters the decision to which he had come. The grief of Elizabeth was extreme. That of Aunt Carry was mingled with just indignation at her brother's deplorable weakness, and her sister-in-law's enormous selfishness. But no one in the family seemed to feel so much on the occasion as Lucy M'Cracken, for whom it is hoped the reader will feel the due degree of pity, if he does not harbour suspicion that she had a hand in the threatening notice. She was confident she never could live in Dublin ; the happiest days of her life had been spent in the Irish highlands. Mrs. Spenser began by trying to console her, and ended by scolding and telling her sharply that if she wanted to continue in the country she must look out for another nursery to govern. Then Lucy commanded her feelings, and went resignedly to pack her trunk.

END OF VOL II.





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